

ABSTRACTS OF SIKH STUDIES

(Vol IX, Issue 1)

Jan-March 2007 / 538-39 NS

EDITORIAL

BEGINNING OF THE BEGINNING
— TWO MOMENTOUS DECISIONS

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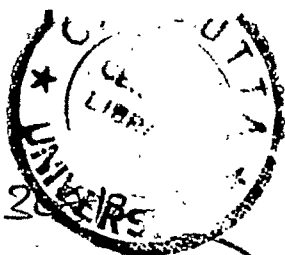
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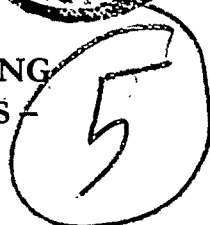
EDITORIAL

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BEGINNING OF THE BEGINNING - TWO MOMENTOUS DECISIONS -

P 30812



In the present age of rapidly advancing technology, education is the key factor in any meaningful programme for development of a community. The Institute of Sikh Studies recently organized a seminar on the state of education in rural Punjab, which revealed an alarming situation. The education system in the State seems to have virtually collapsed. Education is largely a responsibility of the State Government, which has a vast network of primary and secondary schools in the Punjab, so that nobody can complain of lack of access to school. But look at their performance. As pointed out in our last issue also, the result of 79 senior secondary schools for the 10th and 10+2 classes was 0% and that of 219 similar schools was below 10% according to a PHRO report submitted in 2006. Dropout rate in schools is high and, with about 70% of literacy, Punjab cannot be called an educationally advanced state.

The state of education was discussed in the seminar organized by the IOSS on the 1st and 2nd October, 2006, at Chandigarh. The findings are being published separately, and the state of affairs has been brought to the notice of the State government in a strongly-worded memorandum (reproduced elsewhere in this issue). It would, however, be futile to expect any meaningful action on it in the near future, since, as we all know, most of the politicians who control the government are often unscrupulous and, unfortunately, the official hierarchy controlling the schools and other educational institutions has, too, shown a lamentable lack of concern over the deteriorating standards in the past. The view prevailed in the seminar that since the bulk of the Sikh population lived in the rural areas of the Punjab, where the situation is worst, it would be suicidal to just sit back and wait for things to improve.

Besides the govt schools, there are a large number of private schools, where, with a few exceptions, the situation is only marginally better. A major overhauling of the educational system is, therefore, necessary to ensure quality education for our children and youth. We know the weaknesses. School buildings are inadequate. There are very few libraries, laboratories, play grounds, and other infrastructural facilities required for effective teaching. Abject poverty in rural areas rules out opportunities of higher education to rural youth. Some private organizations have taken the initiative, and shown that given adequate funds, things can be improved. But a much bigger effort is required for a major visible effect.

It is indeed very heartening to know that the ISC has decided to deal with this problem on a priority basis. In the meeting of the Interim Executive Committee held on December 4, 2006, it decided to create atleast one Billion Dollar Sikh Education Fund to virtually revolutionise the education system, so that all impediments are removed and the community can be counted among the front-runners of the most educated and advanced communities of the world.

The target of one billion dollars might appear a bit too ambitious, but it is certainly not unachievable over a period of ten years or so. There is no dearth of philanthropists among Sikhs with plenty of money and a keen desire to do something for humanity at large and the Sikh community in particular. There is no other cause today more sacred than this, and we are sure that liberal contributions will be forthcoming. It is clear from the fact that the moment the resolution was passed, the members present in the meeting started announcing their contribution and a sum of approximately Rs 8 lakhs was collected there and then. We are confident that Sikhs, who aspire to see a better future for our younger generation and an honourable place for our community, will contribute generously.

There are thousands of gurdwaras, *deras* and other Sikh organizations with an aggregate income running into billions of dollars annually. If they earmark even one tenth of their income, as they should, the target can be achieved in a single year, and the projects envisaged can be launched without further delay.

The ISC must also come out with a comprehensive document giving details of the projects to be undertaken. These should include *inter alia*:

- a. Setting of new model schools. There should be atleast one top

class school in each Development Block of Punjab, with features successfully tried in the chain of Kalghidhar Trust Schools under the name Akal Academies launched by Baba Iqbal Singh of Baru Sahib, as well as the Tughalwal model of Sardar Swaran Singh.

- b. Provision of buildings, laboratories, libraries, play grounds, computer education facilities, religious instruction, teaching aids to all schools.
- c. Training and motivation of teachers with suitable incentives.
- d. Incentives to students for excellence in studies and sports.
- e. Scholarships to deserving students for higher education to the highest level available in India as well as abroad.
- f. Technical training and guidance and placement services for youth seeking employment.

Lack of finances should not stand in the way of aspiring and deserving Sikh youth in the pursuit of highest academic achievements. The govt of India has promised 7 *crores* of new jobs in the next Five Year Plan. Our young men have to be imparted the necessary training for these jobs. At the moment, they are not qualified to avail of the new opportunities. It is necessary to organize special training programmes and crash courses, particularly in the rural areas to prepare the youth. Otherwise, the employment opportunities will go to people from the other states migrating to Punjab, with attendant social and demographic effects.

SIKH TV CHANNEL

This was the second historic decision adopted by the ISC on the 4th of December, 2006. Reading habit is vanishing, particularly among Sikh youth, so that use of electronic media and TV is the only way of communicating with them. We have a huge network of gurdwaras the world over. Wherever the Sikhs go, the first thing they do is to construct a gurdwara. Unfortunately, it is only the old generation that attends the morning and evening services. The youth is conspicuous by its absence. TV channels or sports have a greater attraction for them. The youth is going astray under the influence of new western and consumerist cultural environment and TV and multimedia programmes. They are completely unaware of their own great cultural and spiritual heritage. They know nothing of their history, the sacrifices made by their ancestors to shed the shackles of slavery and to restore the dignity

and honour to the lowly, humble and downtrodden people of India. They do not know that our Gurus gave to the world a practical whole-life universal religion with a positive worldview. They do not know we have a scripture that addresses the whole world, and not followers of a particular faith alone, and is indispensable for bringing different faiths together. Ours is a religion that preaches equality and justice, and decries discrimination on the basis of race, caste, creed, gender or social status. Its ideal is 'saint-soldier', i.e., one who lives a peaceful life as a saint, but does not hesitate to take up arms, when injustice to anyone is done. Martyrdom is an essential component of our faith, and a Sikh following his Gurus, is ready to make any sacrifice to defend the right of freedom of faith to everyone, including those belonging to other faiths.

Our youth as well as people of other faiths have to be urgently made aware of such features of our faith, to bring our youth back and for a better understanding of our religion and culture by other communities. This is particularly important, since we have widely been misunderstood as Arabs or followers of Osama bin Laden or some terrorist outfits.

This can be done through a 24-hour TV channel showing our history, exegesis of *bani*, special discourses on Sikh philosophy, Sikh classics, special programmes for youth, debates, question and answer sessions, *kirtan*, etc. A lot of activities around the world affecting Sikhs and problems facing the Sikhs in India and abroad need to be highlighted. Even the activities of the ISC itself need to be promoted through the TV medium. Youth is looking for role models and heroes in the Sikh form, which emphasises the need for such films to be screened on the TV.

Thus, there is ample justification for starting a TV channel without further delay. Preliminary estimates indicate that a modest beginning can be made with as little as two *crores* of Rupees.

We appeal to every member of the Panth to contribute liberally for the cause of the Education Fund as well as the Sikh TV Channel Fund. These projects will run under special Trusts with trustees of impeccable integrity to ensure proper utilization of every penny of donation, under complete transparency. Let each of us contribute our share, however meagre, to these two ambitious projects impacting the destiny of the Khalsa Panth.

THE SIKH IDENTITY*

DALJEET SINGH

INTRODUCTORY

In order to understand the sovereignty and independence of the Sikh religion we shall discuss the subject under the following heads:

(1) Spiritual experience and concept of God, (2) Ideology, (3) Class, (4) Scripture, and (5) *Panth* and Its Institutions. Since the subject of Sikh identity is very wide, only a brief reference to the various elements mentioned above, will be made.

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE AND THE CONCEPT OF GOD

It is significant that Guru Nanak clearly claims that he has a mission as ordained by God, "O Lalo, I say what the Lord commands me to convey."¹ This statement about their prophethood and mission has been made by the other Gurus as well, of course, the mission is the same as proclaimed by Guru Nanak. In describing the spiritual experience, the Gurus have unambiguously asserted the existence of the Fundamental Spiritual Reality, and its ineffability. Yet, they have described profusely the various attributes of God, social, political, ethical, metaphysical, etc. Three things they have repeatedly emphasized, first, that He is Unknowable, second, that He is the Source and Ocean of all values and virtues, and third, that He is All-Love: "Friends ask me; what is the mark of the Lord. He is All-Love; the rest He is ineffable."² These important characteristics described by the Gurus, stress the dynamic and creative character of God. Seen in the light of the Indian definition of *Sat-Chit-Anand*, and the characteristics tabulated by Stace³ and William James, this definition is clearly different in the sense that whereas the Guru's spiritual

* Courtesy: Singh Brothers, Amritsar, *Essential of Sikhism*, p 255-265

experience, the others indicate a sense of tranquility, blissfulness and passivity.

It is not suggested that the Gurus deny the experience of blissfulness, but they highlight the dynamic aspect of that experience. In fact, the significant activities of the lives of the Gurus and the Sikh religion clearly bear the stamp of that spiritual experience. In this respect the Gurus also stress four aspects of their concept of God. First, that apart from being transcendent, He is also immanent; and being immanent, He is Creative and Directive, i.e., He has a Will. The second quality emphasized is that He is the Ruler, Protector and Sovereign (*Rakba*). The third attribute is His being the source of all values and virtues. And the fourth aspect emphasized is His interest in life and the universe. It is these principal attributes of God and the spiritual experience of the Gurus that give a new shape and identity to Sikhism and its life, i.e., its dynamism and ethical activities.

IDEOLOGY

The chief elements of the Sikh ideology are based on the spiritual experience of the Gurus, as indicated above, and their definition of God. The subject may be dealt with under the following heads:

- (a) *Reality of World*: The Gurus have repeatedly stressed the reality of the world. In fact, the very concept of God being Immanent in the world means the profound importance of the world and life. The Guru says: 'God created the world and permeated it with His Light.'⁴ Evidently, the universe in which God is immanent and is working with His Light, could neither be unreal, *mithya* or a suffering. So that is an important departure which Sikhism has made from the then existing Indian religions.
- (b) *Goal*: The Gurus have already defined that God has a Will with which He works the world. This being so, Guru Nanak clearly lays down that the goal of life is to work in line with God's Altruistic Will. He rejects the path of ascetic silence and states that the human goal is to carry out or move according to the Will of God. Guru Nanak puts the question as to how to become a '*sachiaru*' or True Man, and how to break the wall of falsehood (obstructing our vision)? Then he gives the answer, saying that the goal or the true path is to carry out the Will of God.⁵ This is

also a very important departure from the goal prescribed in Indian religions, which is generally of merger in Brahman or extinction in the ocean of Nirvana or Brahman. This very important departure from the goal in Indian systems, has great implications. For that reason, while it rejects the path of withdrawal and asceticism, it clearly prescribes a life of dynamic activity in accordance with the Attributive Will of God. It is because of this goal that the entire system of Sikhism is different from the other Indian religious systems, in which monasticism, celibacy, *Abimsa* are accepted institutions. It is this contrast in goals that makes for the Sikh way of life being entirely different from the paths prescribed in other religions. The goal is so different that the Gurus have used the Semitic words '*bukm*' and '*razd*' to express their concept of this ideal.

- (c) *Methodology*: The world being real, and the goal being to carry out the attributive Will of God, naturally this leads to a life of altruistic activities for the seeker. The Guru says that it is by our deeds that we are assessed by God.⁶ "It is by our deeds that we become away from or near to God."⁷ "Good, righteousness, virtues and the giving up of vice are the ways to realize the essence of God."⁸ Love, contentment, truth, humility and virtues enable the seed of *Naam* to sprout."⁹

"Everything is lower than truth; Higher is truthful living or conduct."¹⁰

In short, in Sikhism, according to the Gurus, it is by one's deeds and one's character that one is judged by God.

- (d) *Gurmukh or the Ideal Man*. We have already indicated the goal in Sikhism. Naturally, the ideal man is the one who lives God in life, and always carries out His Altruistic Will. In this regard, the Gurus have indicated two concepts, one of *manmukh* and the other of *gurmukh*. *Manmukh* is the egoistic man, who, being unconscious of the universal Will of God, lives and works egoistically. The Gurus have clearly stated that man's problems and maladies, all arise from his egoism and selfish living. Clash, conflicts and wars in life arise, because at the present level of consciousness or our existence, we neither comprehend nor accept the universal character of life and the brotherhood of man. It is this egoistic

living that brings us into conflict with other beings. The Gurus do not accept or assume any concept of fall, evil or Satan in life. They only state that at the present stage of development, man is egoistic and for that matter imperfect. They prescribe the methodology, as mentioned above, of altruistic deeds, that alone can make for his spiritual progress. They clearly lay down a message of hope, right effort and progress; "O man you are superior in God's creation; now is your opportunity. You may fulfill or not fulfill your destiny."¹¹ "You have obtained the privilege of human birth; now is your opportunity to meet God."¹² "God created first Himself, then *Haumain* (sense of individuation), third, *Maya*. (multifarious beings and entities), and the fourth higher stage is of *gurmukh* who always lives truthfully."¹³

This concept of *manmukh* and *gurmukh* is fundamental to the understanding of Sikh theology. The Gurus have emphasized three things. First, that at the present stage of development man is egoistic and all his problems of conflict, clash and suffering are due to his ignorant and egoistic living. But they, on that account, neither curse man nor life, rather they hold out hope for man saying that by living a life of virtuous deeds and accepting the universal character of God, they can not only alleviate their suffering but also make for spiritual progress towards their destiny. The third important thing is that the fourth stage of *gurmukh* is not of a man who merges in God, but it is of a *gurmukh* who always lives truthfully. Hence, the fourth stage of *gurmukh* is of one who continuously carries out the altruistic Will of God. And God being the Protector of the weak, the Destroyer of the evil-doers¹⁴ and the demonical¹⁵, the *sachiara*, or the *gurmukh* always participates fully in life and accepts total social responsibility. His sphere of functioning is as wide as the domain of God and no aspect of life is taboo for him. In short, he accepts all challenges of life, and seeks to solve them altruistically. Therefore, the Gurus prescribed for the *gurmukh* an ideal of *Sant-Sipahi*. This concept follows clearly and logically from the spiritual experience of the Gurus, their definition of God and their theology as mentioned above. As God is the Protector of the weak, Just (*Adli*) and Destroyer of the evil-doer, and this being His Will, acting and directing in the universe, the *gurmukh* as the instrument of God must inevitably follow that spiritual course. Hence,

‡ this ideal of *Sant-Sipahi*, while in perfect consonance with the thesis of the Gurus, is entirely different, and in certain respects, diametrically opposed to some of the principal elements of the earlier religious systems. Accordingly, in no manner can the independent character of Guru Nanak's ideology be doubted or confused with any other identity or religious system.

CLASS

As following from the spiritual experience of the Gurus and their theology, is determined the class or category of Guru Nanak's system. Broadly, we may classify religious systems into four classes. First is ‡ the category of Indian systems which are dichotomous in the sense that logically the spiritual path is different from the empirical path. Therefore, in dichotomous systems, monasticism, asceticism, *Sanyas* and withdrawal are prescribed as a part of their religious methodology. The second corollary of these systems or *Sanyasa* is that involvement in the world is a distraction and virtually a fall. The third corollary is that celibacy is a virtue and for that matter householder's life is generally discarded and woman is considered to be a temptress. The fourth corollary is that *Ahimsa* or pacificism is an integral virtue. It is because of this dichotomy between the spiritual and the empirical lives, we believe, that the highly discriminatory and unfair system of caste, untouchability and pollution has continued to be a part of the Indian ✱ empirical life. The second category of systems includes Judaism and Islam, which are whole-life systems, because in these, spiritual life and empirical life are combined. But both these systems have two other features. One, they are both exclusive in their character. Second, in both of them in the later part of their history, monasticism and asceticism have appeared and been accepted. This happens in the form of Essenes, Kabbalists, etc. in the case of Judaism, and various sects of Sufism in the case of Islam. To the third category of systems belongs Christianity, which although it accepts involvement in life, strictly prescribes non-resistance to evil, and pacificism. Probably on this account, in Christianity, which was originally a householder's religion, ✱ later appeared monasteries and nunneries. It is for the same reason that later still the institutions of secularism and communism have arisen in the Western life, involving thereby a virtual dichotomy

between the religious life and the empirical life.

To the fourth class of religious systems, belongs Sikhism. While like Judaism and Islam, it is a whole-life system, it is free from their other two features, namely, of exclusiveness and of accepting monasticism and withdrawal as a part of their religious system. In Sikhism, on the other hand, both these features have been rejected. Sikhism discards monasticism, asceticism and withdrawal. This rejection was made clear both by Guru Nanak in not allowing Baba Sri Chand to be his successor, and by the subsequent Gurus by excluding *Sanyasis* and ascetics from the Sikh fold. Obviously, a whole-life system with the concept of *Miri* and *Piri* and the ideal of *Sant-Sipahi*, could not in any manner countenance the presence of recluses and *Sanyasis* as a part of their flock. For the same reasons, both celibacy and the downgrading of women, were emphatically rejected. Nor could a *Miri-Piri* system accept *Abimsa* as a virtue or a part of its religious ethics. Further, the importance of work and sustaining life was clearly recommended, and yogic aloofness condemned. For similar reasons caste ideology was rejected since it militated against the Gurus' basic principle of fairness and brotherhood of man. Lastly, in order to give a clear and visible shape to his new ideology, the Sixth Master created the institution of Akal Takht at the same place as Harmandir Sahib with separate flags representing *Miri* and *Piri*. An important feature signifying this combination is that the Sixth Master wore two *kirpans* meaning thereby an integral unity of spiritual and empirical life in the Sikh system, because *Piri* was represented by a *kirpan* as much as *Miri* was done. It is significant that in Nathism, which was a very old system, quite alive in the Punjab, the Nath had to take vows for remaining celibate, for not doing any work or business, and for strictly observing *Abimsa*.¹⁶ Although these recluses did to an extent accept the validity of the caste system and the Hindu gods, Guru Nanak categorically rejected all these features, and organised a whole-life system of householders participating in all walks of life and remaining socially responsible.

Another important fact which generally goes unnoticed is that the Tenth Master in prescribing the wearing of *kirpan* for the Sikhs clearly reminds him of his duty against aggression and tyranny, and warns him against any relapse into a monastic or ascetic system of

withdrawal from life. Hence, in every respect and in the essentials of its theology, Sikhism belongs to a class of systems quite apart and independent in its ideology. For, Guru Nanak and the succeeding Nine Masters clearly demonstrated in their lives what Sikhism stood for and how it was to be lived in a manner emphatically different from not only the Indian systems but also from the three Semitic systems, current in his times. In fact, clear direction was given to see that features that had appeared in some of the earlier whole-life systems did not creep in Sikhism at some later stage. All this shows how clear were the Sikh Gurus in their vision and about the independence and sovereignty of their system and the mission they were to pursue.

SCRIPTURE

Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Scripture is the most emphatic pronouncement about the distinct and independent identity of Sikhism. Apart from being the embodiment of the words or *Shabad* of the Gurus, and for that matter of the commandments of God and the Sikh doctrines, and being final in every respect, it is the living guide of the Sikhs and has been so apothecated by the Tenth Master. The phenomenon of Sikh Scripture is unique in the annals of religious history of man. In the case of every other religion, its scripture was compiled decades, and mostly centuries, after the prophet had left the physical scene. In all these cases numerous problems of authenticity, textual accuracy and advertant additions and interpolations, have arisen, thereby creating many controversies, both among the faithful and the scholars. In fact scholarly debate has arisen in Christianity as to whether or not Christ wanted to initiate a new religion or intended only to reform Judaism. But the step taken by the Fifth Master makes it absolutely clear that the Gurus had a new thesis to give, entirely different from the earlier ones, and for that matter, it required a separate and authentic compilation. By this important measure, the Master eliminated all possibilities of attendant controversies that had arisen in the case of other religions. Secondly, he made it equally explicit that in its message the Scripture was final and complete. And the Tenth Master, while stopping the line of human succession to the Guruship, made it clear what the position of the *Guru Granth* is in the Sikh religion. The Gurus thus created a tradition that not a word could be altered

nor any line added to the *Guru Granth*. The story about Ram Rai, Guru's own son, and other similar incidents make it clear how particular the Gurus were in maintaining and securing the authenticity of the *Bani* (*Shabad*) and how sacred they felt to be its character as the vehicle of Truth.

In this context, one fact is very significant. In the presence of the existing position on the *Guru Granth* neither can there be an alteration in the Sikh thesis, nor can any saint or person, while claiming to be a Sikh, attempt to create any deviation or schism in the Sikh society. It is in this background that one can understand the activities and writings of two writers of long association with a Christian Mission in Punjab, in making unfounded and misleading statements about the authenticity of the Kartarpuri Bir. The surprising part of such statements, in fact, some misstatements¹⁷, is that those have been made or repeated without a proper study or examination of the Bir or the authentic literature that existed long before these persons raised unwarranted doubts. And the very fact that some of those statements or the intentions behind making them, is being now denied, shows the fishy nature of such attempts. All we wish to emphasize is the great and unprecedented vision of the Sikh Gurus in authenticating the Sikh Scripture, thereby eliminating for the future the possibility of any such controversy. This shows both the clear identity of the Sikh thesis and the intention of the Gurus to secure its purity for all times to come. The Sikh Gurus were fully aware of numerous scriptures in India and outside, and it is in that background that they took the monumental step of authenticating the *Guru Granth Sahib*. The implications of this step about Sikh identity are indeed profound and emphatic.

PANTH AND ITS INSTITUTIONS .

We have already indicated Guru Nanak's system was a whole-life or *Miri-Piri* system and, for that matter, it envisaged the creation of a society or *Panth*. For, it was not a salvation religion for the guidance or benefit of a few. In this matter, Sikhism is entirely different from the Bhakti religions or the other Indian religions. This intention of Guru Nanak is clear from the very start. For, wherever he went, he created and organised Sikh societies with a place for the regular or periodical socio-religious meetings of his groups. And after the close

of his travels, he organised such a centre at Kartarpur. It is clear that his purpose was not of merely giving a new thesis, but he also wanted to organise a society that should live the ideals laid down by him. It is for that purpose that he started the institution of succession, since he knew that although the thesis had been clearly expounded in his *Bani*, the society he had initiated, had still to be nurtured, motivated and developed. Of course, Guru Nanak had laid down the lines on which his society was to work, and the targets it was to achieve. His being a *Miri-Piri* system, it was he who had rejected the doctrine of *Ahimsa*. Apart from that, the institution of *Langar* was also initiated by him; it was something which was wholly revolutionary in his times. For, not only Shudras but Muslims also participated and sat at the same platform. In the work and lives of the subsequent Gurus, we can see a clear development and ascent in the organisation of the Sikh *Panth*. Separate centres of the Sikh societies were created, which were all linked to the central place where the Gurus worked and where periodical meetings of the entire Sikh *Sangats* were held. Apart from that, the institution of *Daswandh* was created. It is significant that both the field centres and the place of the Guru dealt with social as well as religious problems of the Sikh society. The primary object of all this was, on the one hand, to knit together the Sikhs as a separate *Panth* or People, and, on the other hand, to wean them away from the other religions and cults, which were numerous in the country. The Sixth Master, in pursuance of the instructions of his father, started militarisation of the Sikh society, and raised the institution of the Akal Takht side by side with the Harmandir Sahib. Almost since the time of the Fifth Master, the Sikh society started growing as a parallel socio-political organisation. As it was also militarised, the tension between the Sikh society and the state naturally grew, ultimately leading to open clashes. The Seventh Master promised aid to Dara and the event was evidently not forgotten by the Delhi Emperor. Similarly, the organisation of a Millat, a people, by the Ninth Master came to the notice of Emperor Aurangzeb, who offered¹⁸ to give grant to the Guru, if the latter gave up his political and what he felt to be somewhat rebellious activities. The Guru declined the offer. The intentions of the Gurus became clear and open, when finally the Tenth Master formally organised the institution of *Sant-Sipahis* or the Khalsa with

Amrit ceremony. What is very significant is that as an essential component of the Sikh thesis, he prescribed the wearing of *kirpan*, which indicated that the Sikhs had neither to abandon or relax in regard to their responsibility of reaction against injustice and oppression, nor had this society to relapse into a group of *Sants* unconcerned with the problems of the empirical life and their responsibility to solve them.

The broad indication of the development of the Sikh society from the time of Guru Nanak to the Tenth Master, makes it clear that from the very start the Gurus were aiming at the creation of a people imbued with the ideals of *Sant-Sipahi*, based on the *Miri-Piri* or whole-life doctrine of Guru Nanak. For, Sainapat records that on the Baisakhi day 1699 was revealed the plan, which, till then, was in the mind of the Master.¹⁹ The question is not of what an arm-chair scholar might feel today, but the important fact is what was the perception of the state during the period from the mid-sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth century. The martyrdom of the Fifth and the Ninth Masters and the open military clashes between the armies of the state and the Sikhs showed that the Delhi Empire always took the Sikh society to be an unwanted political entity, which had to be curbed and destroyed. Hence the conflict between the Sikhs and the Mughal state and the ultimate triumph of the Sikh society is not a phenomenon subsequent to the Guru period, but a continuing war of socio-political interests between two societies of which both sides were fully conscious and working for the success of their respective objectives. So far as the Gurus were concerned, we have already stated that they were developing a society or a people inspired with the values of the *Miri-Piri* thesis of Guru Nanak. Hence the identity of the society was unquestioned by the political rulers of the day, and is, for that matter, unquestionable, both in the field of religion and that of social growth. The institution of the *Panth* started by Guru Nanak, the system of succession and the Ten Masters who nurtured and matured the Sikh society, the institution of *Langar*, brotherhood and equality, coupled with the institution of work and production, can be explained only on the assumption that Guru Nanak had a separate thesis which was calculatedly sought to be implemented. Similarly, the institution of *Daswandh*, the history of martyrdoms and extreme sacrifice by the Gurus themselves, and the institution of *Amrit* and the Five *Kakars*

equally highlight how this society was welded into a people with new motivations and ideals. In fact, this uniqueness is also evident from the failures of some scholars, drawn from pacifist or dichotomous religions to understand the logical unity and integrity of the Sikh thesis. Because according to the logic of their systems the development of the Sikh society from the seventeenth century does not appear to them to be congruous with the doctrines of their pacifist or dichotomous religions. On the other hand, seen in the light of the whole-life thesis of Guru Nanak, the entire history and institutions of the Sikh society appear so natural, logical, necessary, and understandable.

CONCLUSION

We have discussed the Sikh identity under the five heads mentioned earlier. The spiritual experience of the Gurus being different from that in the case of other systems, their ideology is equally new and different; since, instead of being dichotomous or pacifist, it is a whole-life system that considers the development of a socio-religious society to be essential. But that society has not in any manner to be exclusive, nor the struggle for justice only for a narrow cause. In fact, its history shows that the approach of the Sikh society has always been universal. For, it was the Sikh society which for the first time brought a sense of equality among the different castes and creeds in India. An equally important fact is that although the Sikhs had a long history of struggle with the Muslim state, they, while in power, never tried to convert Hindus or Muslims to the Sikh faith. In fact, both the communities flourished because of respectful regard for their faiths. The treatment the Sikh armies gave to their vanquished adversaries or to the civil populations, can bear comparison with the conduct of any army, contemporary or modern.

It is significant that it was Guru Nanak's call for playing the game of love and sacrifice, which the Tenth Master repeated at the time of the *Amrit* ceremony. For, just as Guru Nanak wanted a total commitment for the cause of the faith, the same total commitment was desired by the Tenth Master in response to which the Five *Piyaras* offered their heads. And the important fact is that this commitment to the faith was led and sanctified by the Gurus themselves with their own blood. Apart from the five factors mentioned above, the Tenth

Master himself emphasized this identity by the introduction of the *Nash Doctrine*,²⁰ while administering *Amrit* to the Five *Piyaras*. For, he said that break with the earlier religious traditions, with the earlier superstitions, rituals and taboos, with the earlier ancestry or lineage, with the earlier deeds and professions or their immobility, was complete. By this *Nash Doctrine* the Tenth Master endowed the Sikh society with Five Freedoms or Liberations from all earlier traditions and taboos. What we seek to emphasize is that Sikh identity is not in any manner artificial, it is the one that was clearly created and proclaimed by the Gurus themselves.

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## ORIGIN OF THE HINDU-SIKH TENSION IN THE PUNJAB\*

DR GANDA SINGH

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In truth, it is a misnomer to call it Hindu-Sikh tension. It is, in fact, only Arya Samaj – Sikh tension. The new name has come to be given to it very recently. A reference to the columns of the *Arya Gazette* and the *Satdharma Pracharak* will show that the Arya Samajists for a long time carried on a campaign against the word Hindu and refused, to associate themselves with it. But this is a separate topic of study.

For sometime past there has been a good deal of misunderstanding about the origin of the Hindu-Sikh tension in the Punjab. It has become a fashion with some of our people to ascribe to the British or to the political policy of the British Government in India even things with which they had not the remotest connection. One such thing is the beginning of the Hindu-Sikh tension in the Punjab. The Hindu-Sikh tension, as we know, was a thing unknown during the Sikh rule up to the middle of the last century. And there were very happy relations between the two communities during the great uprising of 1857 and the following two decades. There could have been no better opportunity for the Britishers than the Mutiny days to exploit the Sikh sentiment against the Hindu Dogras and Poorbias who were mainly responsible, both directly and indirectly, by secret alliances and open betrayals, for the down-fall of the Sikh kingdom. Another opportunity offered itself to the British in the closing years of the eighteen sixties when a schismatic sect of the Sikhs, the Kookas, in their overflowing zeal and fanatical frenzy, pulled down a number of Hindu tombs and went about shouting: *Marhi masani dbai-ke kar dio madana*, meaning 'Pull down the mausoleums and crematories and level with the earth.' But

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\* Reproduced from *M P Kendri Singh Sabha Newsletter*, Bhopal, August 2006, p. 49-52

nobody took these activities of the Kookas very seriously and they provided no pretext for anyone to create hostilities between the Hindus and the Sikhs. It is, therefore, not correct to say that "the unfilial sentiments of the Sikhs towards Hinduism were the creation of the British who, true to their policy of 'divide and rule' tried to create separatism." (Suraj Bhan, *The Tribune*, Ambala, September 25, 1957.)

Historically speaking, the tension had its origin in the unhappy language used for Guru Nanak and his followers by Swami Dayananda, the founder of the Arya Samaj, in his book the *Satyarth Prakash* published in 1875, the year in which, on April 10, the first Arya Samaj was established in Bombay.

(I shall not quote extensively from the first edition of the *Satyarth Prakash* or from its later revised and enlarged editions to avoid unpleasantness.)

The word used for the Sikh Guru therein is *dhurta*, which, according to Bate's Dictionary of the Hindi language, means "rogue, cheat, fraudulent, crafty, cunning, knavish, sly, dishonest, and mischievous." The hymns of the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture, he called *mithya* (falsehood), and Sikhism, a *jal* (ਜਾਲ - a snare) to rob and cheat simple folk of their wealth and property (*ghan adik barna ke waste*).

Two years later, Swami Dayananda came to the Punjab and established the Arya Samaj at Lahore. In his discourses in the Punjab, he always praised the work of the Sikh Gurus. This attracted a number of Sikhs to the Arya Samaj. One of them, Bhai Jawahir Singh, later became the Secretary of the Lahore Arya Samaj and also of the DAV College Managing Committee.

While Swami Dayananda was at Kanpur, on his return from the Punjab, Sardar Bhagat Singh, Sub-Engineer of the Ajmer Division, wrote to him in protest against his objectionable remarks in the *Satyarth Prakash* against the Sikhs and Sikhism. Swamiji wrote back saying that his opinion had undergone a change during his visit to the Punjab and that the remarks in question would be deleted from the next edition of the book. But nothing came to be done. It was, perhaps, due to the untimely death of Swamiji on October, 10, 1883. The second edition of the *Satyarth Prakash* was, perhaps, then still in the press. With the passage of time, the publication of the second edition of the *Satyarth Prakash* and the admission of some over-zealous youngmen into the Arya Samaj, the attitude of some of the leading Arya Samajists became



increasingly hostile towards Sikhs and Sikhism. The columns of the *Arya Samachar*, Meerut and the *Arya Patrika*, Lahore, of those days bear witness to this.

The second edition of the *Satyarth Prakash* turned out to be more disappointing and hostile. In it the attack on the Sikh Gurus, the Sikh scripture and the Sikh people in general was more direct, more biting and more painful. Guru Nanak was given out as illiterate, self-conceited and hypocrite. The Sikh scripture was insulted and the tenets and symbols of Sikhism were ridiculed. And the Sikhs in general were dubbed as arrogant and slaves to lust.

This naturally disillusioned such of the Sikhs as were members of the Arya Samaj or were its active supporters. They felt very much hurt and dejected. What added to the tension was the fanatical attitude of some members of the Arya Samaj who went out of their way to flash the wrongful remarks of the *Satyarth Prakash* and unnecessarily wounded the susceptibilities of the Sikhs.

There were, however, some well-meaning members of the Arya Samaj who sincerely felt that a wrong had come to be done to the Sikhs by the objectionable remarks of Swami Dayananda. They wrote apologetic and appeasing letters and notes in the *Vidya Prakashak* and other journals and newspapers. To quote only one, Lala Amolak Ram Munsif of Gujjar Khan writing to the Editor, *Akhbar-i-Aam*, Lahore, on September 30, 1887, said:

Mere piare aur mukarram Editor *Akhbar-i-Aam*,

Kisi gumnam sahib ne ap-ke akhbar ke zariye hamare muazziz aur fakhr-i-qaum Sikh bhaiyon ko Arya dharm ke barkhilaf mushtaa' karne ke waste Swami Dayanand Surasti ke *Satyarth Prakash* se ek intikhab shaya kiya hai. Main sacche dil se umid karta hun kih yih us ki koshish-i-basidana bilkul raigan jaegi.

Arya Samaji Dayanand Saraswati ko sirf insan samajhta hai. Har ek insan se ghalti honi mumkin hai. Swami Dayanand Saraswatiji ghalaban zaban panjabi aur halat-i-Panjab se *Satyarth Prakash* likhte waqt pure wakif na the. Main yaqin karta hun kih bashart mauqa milne ke woh is rai ko zarur tarmim karte, magar afsos hai kih unko mauqa na mila. Lekin sirf unka yih rai zabir karna Arya Samaj ko paband nabin karta. Mujhe umid hai kih taqriban har ek Arya is rai ki ghalti ka qayal hai. Main khud Arya hone ka fakhar karta hun aur main is rai ko ghalat samajhta hun. Mujhe pura yaqin hai kih mere Singh bhai sirf Swami

*Dayanand Saraswati ki ek ghalti ke bais uk ke baqi nihayat umda kam ke bargiz mukhalif nahin ho jaenge.*

Translated into English it would read as:

My dear and respected Editor the *Akhbar-i-Aam*,

Some anonymous person has published in your paper an extract from Swami Dayananda Saraswati's *Satyarth Prakash* with the object of instigating our respected and glorious Sikh brethren against the *Arya dharma*. I sincerely hope this jealous effort of his will not succeed.

The Arya Samaj considers Swami Dayananda Saraswati a human being. Every human being is liable to err. At the time of writing the *Satyarth Prakash*, Swamiji was probably not fully conversant with the Punjab and Panjabi language ... Alas! he did not get a chance; otherwise, I am sure, he would have amended this opinion. But his expression of this opinion does not bind the Arya Samaj. I hope almost every Arya is convinced of this error. I am proud of being an Arya myself, and I hold this opinion (of Swami Dayananda) to be wrong. I am sure that for this one mistake of Swami Dayananda Saraswati, my Sikh brethren will not at all turn against the rest of his very good work.

Copies of this letter were sent to some other newspapers as well.

The Sikhs were to some extent soothed by the expression of regret and goodwill by those who had reasons to be grateful to the Sikhs for the help and co-operation which they had extended to Swami Dayananda and his movement in the early days. But this did not continue for long. Instead of improving the situation, it was worsened by the fire-breathing speeches of some of the leaders of the Arya Samaj at its eleventh annual session held at Lahore on Saturday and Sunday the 24th and 25th of November, 1888.

Pandit Guru Datt, the leader of the anti-modernist section of the Arya Samaj, in his speech on the morning of Sunday, the 25th of November, not only repeated the anti-Sikh remarks of the *Satyarth Prakash*, but also entered into odious comparisons and launched an attack on Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. The discussions of Lala Murlidhar and Swami Swatmananda on the subject added fuel to the smouldering fire which soon burst out into flames.

Pandit Guru Datt's speech was followed the same evening by that of Pandit Lekh Ram who spoke with still greater force and hostility

against the Sikhs. Not only this. At one stage in the course of his speech, Pandit Lekh Ram physically insulted the holy book of the Sikhs, Guru Granth Sahib, which had been unceremoniously placed there on the table before him. This was more than what the Sikhs present in the meeting could tolerate.

Thus publicly insulted and ridiculed, the Sikhs were left with the only alternative of finally breaking with the Arya Samaj.

There was then a large number of Hindus as well who felt disgusted with this attitude of the leaders of the Arya Samaj. A joint protest meeting was held on the next Sunday, the 2nd of December 1888 in the Baoli Sahib, Lahore, under the presidentship of Lala Nand Gopal. Lala Ladli Prasad was the principal speaker. The other speakers were Bhai Jawahir Singh, Bhai Dit Singh and Dr Narayan Singh. According to the report of the meeting published in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore of December 8, 1888, there was a great resentment in the city of Lahore at the ugly and unpleasant situation created by the leaders of the Arya Samaj in their eleventh annual session held in the last week of November.

This is, in brief, the factual account of how the Hindu (Arya Samaj) – Sikh tension began in the seventies and eighties of the last century, soon after the birth of the Arya Samaj.

In truth, it is a misnomer to call it Hindu-Sikh tension. It is, in fact, only Arya Samaj-Sikh tension. The new name has come to be given to it very recently. A reference to the columns of the *Arya Gazette* and the *Satdharm Pracharak* will show that the Arya Samajists for a long time carried on a campaign against the word Hindu and refused to associate themselves with it.

For a more detailed study, the inquisitive reader is referred to:

The Satyarth Prakash, Hindi, first edition, of 1875 and subsequent revised and enlarged editions and their translations into Urdu, English and Panjabi.

*The Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, November and December 1888.

*The Akhbar-i-Aam*, Lahore, the *Aftab-i-Panjab*, Lahore, the *Koh-i-Noor*, Lahore, for September to December, 1888.

These and other newspapers and journals published at Lahore during the last two decades of the nineteenth century contain very valuable material on this subject.

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As late as June 10, 2006, Swami Agnivesh, President, World Council of Arya Samaj, delivering a keynote address at the International Seminar organised by the Dharam Parchar Committee of SGPC at Amritsar, declared that the objectionable remarks in the *Satyartha Prakash* which offended Sikh sensibilities, would be removed. This statement was published in *The Tribune* dated June 11, 2006. But subsequently, perhaps pressurised by his peers, Swami Agnivesh in a statement given to *The Tribune* on June 16, 2006, went back on his promise as reflected in this statement:

"Apropos the news-item, 'Arya Samaj to remove offensive words from book' (June 11), I, as President of the World Council of Arya Samaj, propose to initiate a series of dialogue between scholars from both sides to transcend differences and heal hurt feelings, if any. It is not my intention to rewrite or alter the original text of Maharishi Dayanand.

There is, however, a real need to offer appropriate footnotes on texts that are likely, if misunderstood, to disrupt the harmony of religions. This would help, additionally, to explore and honour the spirit of Satyartha Parkash and promote spiritual solidarity for social transformation.

What is envisaged is not changing and chopping off the text of Satyartha Parkash but the incorporation of explanatory footnotes so as to avert misinterpretation and to make true meaning of this great and demanding text clearer to contemporary readers."

We still hope that good senses will prevail and that Arya Samaj will bury this long-standing hatchet forever by making suitable amendments in the objectionable remarks against the Sikh Gurus from Swami Dayananda's work.

— Editor

KHALSA PANTH AT THE CROSSROADS

EXCERPTS OF AN INTERVIEW WITH HH JUSTICE MOTA SINGH, QC

HH Mota Singh, Queen's Counsel (Q.C), UK, Retired Circuit Judge, Patron of various British and Interfaith Associations, UK, and head of the International Legal Committee of International Sikh Confederation, beside being a Trustee of a large number of British interfaith and Sikh Trusts in the United Kingdom, has had the distinction of addressing several community and Interfaith organisations on race relations, religious, ethnic and Sikh religious issues at the various national and international fora. He visited the Institute of Sikh Studies on December 8, 2006. During his visit, he had a discussion with the Associate Editor of *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*, Prof Kulwant Singh and answered questions on wide ranging issues concerning Sikh religion, Sikh society and current issues. We reproduce below excerpts from this interview which express his enlightened views:

K.S. I, Prof Kulwant Singh, Associate Editor of the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*, welcome you to India, Punjab and Chandigarh, on behalf of the Institute of Sikh Studies and the International Sikh Confederation. I would like to elicit your views on Sikh religion and its strengths and weaknesses vis-à-vis the other world religions and its evolution, the causes that obstruct its growth and expansion despite its 'Splendid doctrines and ideology'; the threat of increasing incidence of apostasy among the Sikh youth among the diaspora Sikhs as well as those living in Khalsa's birth place, Punjab and the engines of reform which can preserve their unique identity and Sikh heritage, and finally tools of empowerment, which can equip the Sikh youth to become distinguished individuals

as well as enable the Sikh community to play a constructive role in the comity of nations and world communities.

To begin with I refer to Bertrand Russell's quotation about Sikh religion and the Sikhs quoted in your article *Problems of Sikh diaspora* I quote : " If some lucky men survive the onslaught of the First World War of atomic and hydrogen bombs, the Sikh religion will be the only means of guiding them..... it has the capability, but the Sikhs have not brought out, in the broad day light, the splendid doctrines of their religion which has come into existence for the benefit of the entire mankind. This is their greatest sin and the Sikhs cannot be freed of it."

Sir, as an enlightened social analyst and a conscientious Sikh whom would you blame for this 'greatest sin' and how this sin of the past can be condoned; and Sikh religion and its ideology propagated for bringing about a 'spiritual emancipation' of mankind facing the worst crisis of faith and moral degeneration at the present moment?

J.M.S. I think "sin" was perhaps not a very apt word to use; "lapse" would have been more appropriate, but I am not going to quarrel with that. But you do not condone a sin, you make amends. So far as the fixing of responsibility for this lapse or apathy towards religion is concerned, the blame lies as much with the ordinary Sikhs as with the leadership, both political and religious. We look upon our leaders as role models. The general perception is that we have been let down. I believe that if the fundamental composite *mini-piri* ideal of Sikhism and Sikh religion had been observed by our peers, the present day degeneration in our value system might not have crept in. As for the civilizational aspect and 'spiritual emancipation' of mankind, the preaching and teachings of the Sikh Gurus embody the truth that is relevant for mankind to attain its highest spiritual and cultural development. It follows that Sikhism and the Granth Sahib, with their message of hope and optimism, possess the key to the well-being, happiness and peaceful co-existence of mankind. Adherence to the principles and teachings laid down would not only

assist in the realization of the value of co-existence, it might also help to prevent the much talked-about clash of societies. Along with the three pillars of Sikhism — prayer (*naam japna*), work (*kirat karni*) and charity (*wand chhakna*); the balance of the spiritual with the temporal (*mini-piri*); the aspiration to wisdom, grounded in humility and equipoise in every aspect of life — are the elements that constitute a religion of the people, for the people. The only condition of our survival is that we implicitly and unreservedly accept the principles of Sikhism and live up to them. We owe it not only to ourselves, but to humanity at large — it is for their good too, as Bertrand Russell said. I believe the Sikhs can be harbingers of a new and more wholesome culture since Sikhism possesses the key to happiness and peaceful co-existence of the human race. It seeks to knit and not coerce mankind into a universal brotherhood though it is not a religion of passive observers either. It advocates active participation in the process of human evolution. Its brief history is a story of an inexorable battle in the cause of righteousness.

K.S. The first settlers in UK had to compromise with their Sikh identity perforce for earning their livelihood in an alien land but the modern Sikh youth, both abroad as well as in India, are doing away with their Sikh identity out of sheer convenience without bothering about their moral duty of preserving their religious and cultural heritage. Several factors such as the dominance of the elderly counterfeit Sikhs with morally bankrupt social conduct both among the political class and clergy; an urge to come out of the minority syndrome into the national mainstream, mesmerizing influence of the modern electronic media, psychological and mental liberation from the age-old principles of self-restraint in matters of consumption, dress and certain religious taboos and willful negligence of communal pride in one's own rich heritage are responsible for increasing incidence of apostasy among the Sikh youth.

Sir, having diagnosed this malady from all these angles in your article referred to above and despite your modesty to

provide the fool proof answers to this malady, from which point or which stage can a beginning be made in your opinion? Should the Sikhs emulate the Islamic Madarsa type of education for the Sikh children, or should they adopt a more imaginative methodology for influencing their children within the family environs and the school curriculum? Some Sikhs are suggesting the launching of a second Singh Sabha Movement. Sir, what kind of remedial measures would you suggest for halting this alarming trend of doing away with the Sikh symbols and the Sikh code of conduct on the part of the Sikh youth.

J.M.S You have used language in that long preamble which some may consider emotive, but it is a phenomenon that gives cause for concern. It is the lack of knowledge of Sikh heritage among the youth and the lack of dissemination of this heritage by the Sikh parents, Sikh leaders, Sikh institutions, both religious and academic, which have brought about this alarming situation. The modern electronic media and exposure to the present-day consumerist culture, too, has contributed to this damage. But all this could be preempted and counteracted by the Sikh leadership and its religious institutions like the SGPC through their own TV Channel devoted exclusively to the dissemination of true Sikh history, Sikh heritage and Sikh culture. Now I hope this task is going to be accomplished by the International Sikh Confederation which passed a resolution on December 4, 2006 to start an independent TV channel for this purpose. The other factors that you have enumerated in your preamble have also contributed to this malaise. The Sikh youth need to be told that there is more to life than what the present modern culture promotes. They must be made to see and realize the enormity of the misery through which the present-day youth, born and bred on the purely consumerist, non-religious culture, are passing through. Sikh religion, with its distinct code of conduct, provides a perfect roadmap to lead a meaningful life. This needs to be inculcated in the Sikh children by Sikh parents in the family environ and

incorporated in the ordinary School curriculum rather than resorting to the medieval Madarsa Model.

K.S. Sir, you have defined Sikh religion as a 'religion of continuity'. By continuity do you mean simply extension of Sikh identity and Sikh code of conduct or would you accept a diluted version of it in the modern context such as Sikhs with trimmed beards and turbans, though some of them may be having their hair shorn?

J.M.S. I would not countenance any dilution in the observance of our religious tenets and the prescribed code, but I am quite prepared to accept that those amongst Sikhs, who are inclined towards religion but have not yet been convinced of the need to identify completely with their faith, be given time to do it and return to the Sikh fold. Efforts must be made to convince them intellectually about the need to preserve their identity. They need to be told that to be a Sikh is to inherit a faith from those who came before us, to live it and to hand it over to those who will come after us. It is not an identity we assume, but one into which we are born. We are not wrong to see identity as a matter of birth however deeply this may cut across against modern culture. The fact that any of us is born a Sikh is immutable. It happened because generations of our ancestors decided to be Sikhs and to hand on that identity to their children. It flowed from their most basic conviction "*Khalsa mero roop hai kha*". The Khalsa Panth came into being by Divine command "*aagia bhai Akaal ki*". Its foundations were laid by Guru Nanak and its fulfillment came with Guru Gobind Singh. This is a challenge facing Sikhs who are dispersed throughout the world and have integrated into local communities whilst retaining their Sikh identity. I should emphasise that for Sikhs the rules of conduct laid down are sacrosanct and immutable. It is not for us to seek to change or re-write them according to intellectual or political fashion or social needs, or dispense with them because we feel that their observance is inconvenient. We cannot modify the rules of conduct laid down in the Granth Sahib and remain good Sikhs, true to

our religion and ourselves. Moreover, We have a special responsibility towards our youth to ensure that we nurture them and protect them from such temptations. There is enough anecdotal evidence that this is happening on an alarming scale. The trend is not confined to the prosperous Sikh community overseas; it is happening in the heartland of Punjab and even in Amritsar. We should regard it as our foremost duty to inculcate in our youth a sense of pride, pride in their community, in its origins and its history, its religion and its language. And we do so by educating them, by trying to understand them and the pressures on them of living in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society. And of equal importance is the need for parents and elders of the community to be aware of these pressures on young Sikhs. The onus is on us and I make no apology for repeating what I have said on an other occasion. The need of the hour is for enlightened men with a clear vision, steeped in the Sikh Maryada, who with spiritual depth and moral courage, will stand firm against the onslaughts of a modern age. They will speak to our deep instinct that there is more to life than self-indulgence, personal power or position. They will understand the community's problems, anxieties, needs, predicaments and predilections. We have to be alive to the challenges facing our community and to have the ability and courage to articulate its fears and aspirations. We must identify the goals for the community by encouraging able bodied, imaginative, decisive leadership and not succumb to the undignified temptation to indulge in internecine quarrels

K.S. It is increasingly felt by the educated among the Sikhs that the Sikhs must spend a major part of their gurdwara income on education of Sikh children and youth rather than on the somewhat irrelevant rituals like taking out processions on *gurpurbs* and organizing massive *langars*. But the kind of people who control gurdwara managements, from a small rural gurdwara to those situated in mega cities such as New York, do not accept this argument and refuse to realize this need. Sir, how can this paradigm shift in gurdwara management be

brought about? Should not the Sikh intelligensia start taking a more proactive role in the gurdwara management even at the cost of being resisted by the entrenched cliques?

J.M.S. Yes, in my opinion. First of all, those who do that are guilty of a gross dereliction of their duty. They must realize that gurdwara funds are to be utilized for the welfare of the community bearing in mind the society's needs in the modern times. The proposal that one tenth of every gurdwara income be contributed to the Sikh Education Fund (SEF) setup by the International Sikh Confederation is worth consideration by every Gurdwara management. Indeed, I cannot imagine a better use of such funds. Secondly, it was time for the Sikh intelligentsia to take active part in the gurdwara managements. They have sat on the sidelines for too long to the detriment of the community.

K.S. Can Akal Takht and its Jathedar play some role in bringing about this change in the changed times?

J.M.S. Yes. I have the greatest respect for Sri Akal Takht Sahib, the supreme Authority of the Sikhs and its Jathedar; they should certainly consider it as their bounden duty to bring about this urgently needed transformation in gurdwara management.

K.S. Sir, ISC has today passed a resolution to create a Sikh Education Fund (SEF) for empowering the Sikh youth with the most powerful tool of education.

Sir, what in your opinion is likely to be the success rate in this venture especially in the light of common practice among majority of the Sikhs to donate either to gurdwaras or to the Sant Babas rather than to the cause of Education.

J.M.S. It is indeed a regrettable phenomenon. Devotion with discretion rather than blind faith should guide our instincts in matters of charity and philanthropy. Support of the Gurdwaras, both financial and moral, for the Sikh Education Fund, established by the ISC, is indispensable, but of equal, if not greater, importance is the shouldering of responsibility by the ISC organizers. If they are committed to the cause and transparent in their dealings, as I believe they are, the community response is likely to be overwhelming.

- K.S. Sir, in your opinion how much respect and credibility does the ISC leadership command among the Sikh society for undertaking such a colossal task? Are you optimistic about it?
- J.M.S. Someone has to shoulder this responsibility; that is the pressing need of the hour. I am also aware of the general perception that institutions come into being with laudable aims and then they follow the same route of decline and degeneration. But about ISC – its reasons and objectives being paramount for furtherance of the interests of the community, I have no reason to think that it will go the way some other organizations have gone. With the kind of people who have taken up this challenge, I am convinced of their impeccable credentials. I hope and pray they prove equal to the task.
- K.S. Since you are head of the legal Advisory Council of ISC, is there any hope of the Turban issue being solved in favour of the Sikhs in France? With your excellent inter-personal Skills and knowledge of judicial systems of many European countries, should we hope to get this issue tackled amicably in the near future?
- J.M.S. I think the chances of success in the French Courts are limited. But we should not give up the struggle even if it means having to knock on the doors of international institutions such as the The International Court of Human Rights. Having said that, it is always preferable if an emotive and contentious matter such as this can be resolved amicably at the political and diplomatic level. Efforts to do that can go in tandem with the legal struggle.
- K.S. Sir, you being a prolific writer and a man with a vision and an excellent command over the English language, would you accept our request to write more frequently for Abstracts of Sikh Studies.
- J.M.S. Yes, I would be glad to contribute to this prestigious journal of Sikh Studies.

SRI AKAL TAKHT SAHIB*

KHARAK SINGH

“Akal Takht is the primary seat of Sikh religious authority and central altar for Sikh political assembly. Through *hukamnamas*, edicts or writs, it may issue decretals providing guidance or clarifications on any point of Sikh doctrine or practice referred to it, may lay under penance personages charged with violation of religious discipline or with activity prejudicial to Sikh interests or solidarity and may place on record its appreciation of outstanding service rendered by individuals espousing the cause of Sikhism or of the Sikhs.”¹

This great institution was created in 1609 by Guru Hargobind formally to proclaim Sikh faith's common concern for the spiritual and the worldly or the synthesis of *miri* and *piri*.²

Akal Takht has a rich and inspiring history. In fact, history of the Sikhs revolves around the Golden Temple and the Akal Takht. It was used for the accession ceremonies of Guru Hargobind who adopted royal style and conducted secular affairs of the community. He is believed to have issued the first *hukamnama* to far-flung *sangats*, announcing the creation of the Akal Takht and asking them to include in their offerings thenceforth gifts of weapons and horses.³

“The Akal Takht along with the Harimandir constitutes the capital of Sikhism. Meetings of the *Sarbat Khalsa* or general assembly representative of the entire Panth are traditionally summoned at Akal Takht and it is only there that cases connected with serious religious offences committed by prominent Sikhs are heard and decided. *Hukamnamas* or decrees issued by the Akal Takht are universally applicable to all Sikhs and all institutions.”⁴

* Keynote Address delivered at the IOSS seminar on Akal Takht at Chandigarh on 11th November, 2006.

In 1635, Guru Hargobind shifted to Kiratpur, and custody of the Akal Takht passed into the hands of Minas, and remained with them, until in 1699 Guru Gobind Singh sent Bhai Mani Singh to take over. The eighteenth century witnessed the worst repression of Sikhs at the hands of the Mughal and Pathan rulers, which continued upto 1765. During this period, the Guru had to quit Anandpur Sahib, fighting numerous battles with the Mughal forces and the Hill Chiefs, in which the four Sahibzadas and Mata Gujri became martyrs, besides thousands of devoted Sikhs. The Guru himself was assassinated at Nanded at the hands of a hired assassin in 1706.

Sri Akal Takht and the Golden Temple were occupied and desecrated by the Mughal forces. It was a crime to be a Sikh. The government followed a policy of complete genocide of Sikhs, and the orders were 'to kill Sikhs, wherever seen'. The Sikhs had to quit their homes and hearths and move to desert areas of Rajasthan and hilly areas of Punjab. The two *ghallugharas* in which approximately 50,000 Sikhs died, the numerous martyrs whom we remember in our congregational *ardas* every day, the daring deed of Bhai Mehtab Singh and Sukha Singh who beheaded Massa Ranghar for desecration of the Darbar Sahib, the valiant fight of Baba Gurbakhsh Singh and his 30 associates defending the sacred premises of Darbar Sahib and the Akal Takht against the hordes of invaders to the last man, as well as the martyrdom of Baba Deep Singh belong to this period. Abdali demolished Darbar Sahib, the *sanctum sanctorum*, as well as the Akal Takht and desecrated the *sarovar*.

The Sikh struggle continued against heavy odds, and as a result after 1765, the whole of the Punjab came under the sway of the Sikhs who had organized themselves into *misl*s. The Darbar Sahib and the Akal Takht were rebuilt in 1774 and the Akal Takht resumed its role. The *misl* chiefs would organize *Sarbat Khalsa* at the Akal Takht on the occasion of Diwali and Baisakhi every year to pass resolutions or *gurmata*s outlining policies and strategies, which were accepted by all Sikhs as binding on them. "For instance, through a *gurmata* (Guru's counsel) the *Sarbat Khalsa* at the Akal Takht resolved on 14 October, 1745, to reorganize their scattered fighting force into 25 *jathas* or bands of about 100 warriors each. By another *gurmata* on Baisakhi, 29 March 1748, the *Sarbat Khalsa* meeting again at Akal Takht formed the Dal

Khalsa or the army of the Khalsa consisting of 11 *misl*s. On Divali, 7 November, 1760, the Sarbatt Khalsa resolved to attack and occupy Lahore (till then Sikhs had not occupied any territory, their only possession being the small fortress of Ram Rauni or Ramgarh they had built at Amritsar in 1746). Akal Takht was again the venue of the *Sarbat Khalsa* on Baisakhi day, 10 April 1763, when by a *gurmata* it was decided to go out to the help of a Brahmin who had brought the complaint that his wife had been forcibly abducted by the Afghan chief of Kasur."⁵

The Akal Takht as well as the institution of *Sarbat Khalsa* suffered a setback during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who felt little need for these institutions after 1805 when *Sarbat Khalsa* was summoned to consider Jaswant Rao Holkar's request for assistance against the British. The religious authority of the Takht was, however, never questioned. The Maharaja never challenged it, and even demonstrated the state's subservience to it, when he himself appeared in response to its summons, and accepted the *tankhab* (punishment) for moral misdemeanor imposed on him by its custodian, Akali Phoola Singh.

With British occupation of the Punjab, the control of gurdwaras passed on to Mahants, and the Akal Takht was put under the charge of a *sarbrab*, so that these institutions were used only to promote the interests of the Government, and seldom the interests of the Panth. The honouring of General O' Dyer, who perpetrated the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919 is a glaring example. Eventually, the Sikhs launched the Gurdwara Reform Agitation and, as a result of the sacrifices made by the Akalis, the gurdwaras were liberated, and the SGPC was constituted to manage the gurdwaras as well as the Akal Takht, in 1925. The situation has not changed since then. As a result the Takht has been reduced to the position of one of the scores of gurdwaras under the SGPC, and the authority of the *Jathedar* who is appointed by the political party in power, and works at the pleasure of its president, has suffered a setback. This brief historical account makes it clear that fortunes of the Panth are linked with Sri Akal Takht. When it is in competent and sincere hand, the Panth flourishes, as during the Guru period, and later in the 18th century. When, however, its control passes into wrong hands, decline sets in.

The Akal Takht in the present set-up cannot perform the functions

originally envisaged by Guru Hargobind. It was supposed to be the headquarters of the 'state within a state' created by Guru Arjun Dev ji. Now that the Sikhs have spread to almost every country of the world, the need to perform this function and to look after the interests of the community is far greater and more pressing.

In order to restore the pristine glory and intrinsic authority of the Akal Takht, radical reforms are necessary. There are, however, some basic assumptions that must be understood.

1. Authority : Akal Takht derives its authority from Guru Hargobind who created it. The authority, temporal as well as spiritual, remained with him and his successors, during their lifetime. They did not delegate this authority to any individual. Under the doctrine of *Guru Granth-Guru Panth*, the authority now vests in the Guru Panth in attendance upon the Guru Granth Sahib.
2. Jathedar : The position of *Jathedar* (or whatever designation may be given to him) is indispensable to look after the Takht, to run the administration, to receive complaints, suggestions, arrange discussions to facilitate decisions, to announce the decisions, and ensure their implementation. He should be the spokesman of the Akal Takht Sahib. He should not, however, be confused with the Akal Takht or the Panth which is the ultimate decision making body.
3. The Akal Takht rules over the hearts of the people, and thrives on their devotion and commitment to the Guru. The decisions of the Akal Takht are binding on all Sikhs, and should not be criticised on one pretext or the other. Those who do not respect or obey its decisions, have no place in the Panth. At the same time, it must be remembered that only such decisions can command respect and attract implementation without trouble, as are made by the Panth (and not by individuals), after thorough consideration, following a proper procedure, and are in the interest of the Panth as a whole.

THE PRESENT POSITION

While the need for an effective and powerful Akal Takht, the central authority of the Sikhs, was never greater, the prevailing state of affairs is extremely disturbing. The Akal Takht is ill-equipped to

cope with mounting complex problems like apostasy, challenges to Sikh identity, enquiries relating to *gurmat*, problems of Sikh diaspora, pressures from vested interests, etc. As a result, some vital issues facing the Panth, are often neglected, while decisions on others are implemented more in their breach than in compliance. There have been frequent demonstrations at the Akal Takht – a thing unheard of in the past. Without going into further details, it appears that under the present set-up and the present situation, it is difficult for the Akal Takht to keep the Panth together, much less to provide the guidance and lead expected from it.

THE REMEDY

As pointed out earlier, the situation demands radical reforms. It is heartening that the Institute of Sikh Studies has taken the initiative to draw the attention of the Panth to this crisis-like situation. The response to the call from scholars and well-wisher of the Panth has been very encouraging. I do not want to anticipate the outcome of the deliberations. I hope, however, that the problems will be discussed in depth, and I am confident that deliberations will yield recommendations of far-reaching consequences on which will depend the future of the Panth. Some basic realities, which need to be constantly borne in mind, may be reiterated as below:

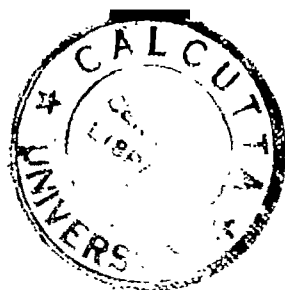
- i. The Akal Takht is the seat of spiritual as well as temporal authority for the Panth or the global Sikh community.
- ii. Its authority vested in the Gurus in their lifetime. Now it vests in the Panth under the doctrine of *Guru Granth-Guru Panth*. As a corollary, control of any one particular party or individual is unacceptable.
- iii. To exercise its authority, constitution of a board of 11 or more eminent members, well-versed in *gurmat*, committed to the Sikh ideals and above party politics, drawn from global Sikh community may be considered.
- iv. The position of *Jathedar* (or whatever designation may be given to him) is indispensable. He should be the spokesman of the Akal Takht, look after its day-to-day functions, and ensure implementation of its decisions.

- v. All decisions should be made by the Board according to procedures laid down in a transparent manner, and implemented scrupulously.
- vi. All pending academic issues like the *Dasam Granth* which have caused or are likely to cause divisions in the Panth, should be resolved at academic level without further delay.
- vii. Relationship between the Akal Takht and the other four Takhts needs to be defined.
- viii. The institution of *Panj Piaras* is closely related with the Akal Takht. Its role and constitution also needs to be defined.
- ix. The Akal Takht needs to be adequately equipped physically as well as otherwise to discharge its functions efficiently. This should include a separate secretariat, besides advisory councils to provide the required technical support in the areas of religion, education, economic, international and legal affairs, besides, public relations. This should be forthcoming from the International Sikh Confederation, recently formed, which is committed to consolidation of the Akal Takht, and is open to all well-wishers of the Panth with its advisory councils in all major disciplines. It is in a unique position to render the required assistance to the Akal Takht.
- x. All political parties and other Sikh organizations should renew their allegiance to the Akal Takht, offer full cooperation and assure compliance of its decisions.

In the end, I offer my best wishes to the organizers of the seminar and the participants of the seminar. I hope the IOSS will come out with a document of practical recommendations, based on these deliberations.

REFERENCES

- 1 *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, Guru Nanak Dev University, Patiala, Vol I, p 66.
- 2 Ibid., p 56.
- 3 Ibid., p 57
- 4 Ibid., p 57
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GURU GRANTH SAHIB - FORM, MESSAGE AND IMPACT -

GURNEK SINGH*

Sikhism is the youngest religion of the world so far as its historical aspect is concerned. It originated with Guru Nanak Dev who was born in 1469 at Rai Bhoi Ki Talvandi now in Pakistan. He was the first Guru of the Sikhs who preached his doctrine throughout India and up to Sri Lanka, Tibet, Mecca, Medina and Baghdad, for which he was commissioned by Almighty Himself. Thus, he transmitted the message of God to the people of the world during his lifetime by taking up long itineraries. For this purpose, he spent his useful years in the service of mankind. He, during his Odysseys or travels, collected the compositions of other Indian saints whose *bani's* temper was in concurrence with his principles. This collection of the hymns he always used to take on his person. Referring to it a famous Sikh savant and scholar Bhai Gurdas says that Muslims at Mecca ask Guru Nanak Dev that kindly let us know who is the superior between Hindus and Muslims. The great Guru Nanak replied that O my brother Hajji, both have to repent without good actions. For, there in the court of the God only good actions and pious living are credited, otherwise one has to repent.

Thus, in this way, from the Guru's *bani*, which is primarily concerned with the spiritual as well as the social aspect of man, emanated the basic teachings of Sikhism which had been incorporated by the fifth Nanak, Guru Arjun Dev in Guru Granth Sahib. The fifth Guru, Guru Arjun Dev got collected the *bani* of the various Sufis and saints, and later on engaged in compiling Guru Granth Sahib. He selected a secluded and peaceful place on the bank of a *sarovar* called

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Ramsar, which was a shady and cool place. Bhai Gurdas was the first amanuensis of the Granth. Guru Arjun Dev very meticulously selected the material out of the available *bani* and got it incorporated in Guru Granth Sahib. After a persistent labour and vigorous mental discipline, it was completed in 1604 AD. He installed it in the newly built Harimandir Sahib, that stands in the middle of the *sarovar* at Amritsar. Such was the importance of Guru Granth Sahib which until then used to be revered as *Pothi*. We also find a reference to it in Guru Granth Sahib wherein it is stated that *Pothi* has taken the place of God.¹ It was installed in Harimandir Sahib in the ambrosial hours and in the late evening, after the recitation and ceremonies were over, the Guru Granth Sahib was taken for night's rest at Guru Ke Mehil, i.e., residence of the Guru. Guru Granth Sahib was placed to rest at a high cot, while Guru Arjun Dev himself used to sleep for the night on the ground in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. In this way, Guru Arjun Dev wanted to convey to the Sikhs that it is the revealed message of God and should be revered as Guru.² Baba Buddha was appointed the first *granthi* of Guru Granth Sahib. Thus, the Granth which was revered by the Guru himself explicitly indicates that it is of great import. There are some important postulates which make its presence unique in the history of world's sacred literature.

Firstly, it is the only sacred Granth of the world which has been compiled by the Guru himself under his direction and supervision. Guru Arjun Dev contributed himself massively and also incorporated other Gurus' *bani* which was also available with him. In this sense, its authenticity is beyond doubt. In this regard, M.A. Macauliffe worked hard for a long time on Sikh thought and literature and produced his *magnum opus*, *The Sikh Religion – its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors*. He, confirming its authenticity and uniqueness, avers:

"The Sikh religion differs as regards the authenticity of its dogmas from most other great theological systems. Many of the great teachers the world has known have not left a line of their own composition, and we only know what they taught through tradition or second hand information. If Pythagoras wrote any of his tenets his writings have not descended to us. We know the teachings of Socrates only through the writings of Plato and Xenophon. Buddha has left no written memorials of his teaching, Kung fu-

4 Tze, known to Europeans as Confucius, left no documents in which he detailed the principles of his moral and social system. The founder of Christianity did not reduce his doctrines to writings, and for them we are obliged to trust to the Gospels according to Mathew, Mark, Luke and John. The Arabian Prophet did not himself reduce to writing the chapters of the Quran. They were written or compiled by his adherents and followers. But the compositions of the Sikh Gurus are presented and we know at firsthand what they taught. They employed the vehicle of verse, which is generally unalterable by copyists, and we even become in time familiar with their different styles. No spurious compositions or extraneous dogmas can, therefore, be represented as theirs.”³

“ The above is the opinion of a person who is a non-Sikh. But he endeavored hard to acquire information about Sikhism, its doctrine and history. He avers further, that it can’t be changed. In Guru Granth Sahib, we find that the counting of hymns has been given by the Guru himself and at the end of each *bani*, their total number has also been given which is the explicit indication that its content and form cannot be changed. But Teja Singh and Ganda Singh wrote a contradictory statement saying that its final form was fixed for all times and also that re-editing was done at the same time. They wrote, “It must be admitted that the final form, which became for all time, was given to the Holy Granth at Damdama Sahib. This work of the re-editing consisted of completing the *Nitnem* (daily prayers) by the addition of four hymns under *so-purkh*, expunging certain unauthorised pieces which had crept in at the end in some copies, amending certain spellings, here and there, and so on. So here the contention and observation of Ganda Singh and Teja Singh is wrong for it is not an ordinary book. On the other hand, it is a revealed Scripture which is also the Guru. The fact is evidently explicit from the *gurbani* itself wherein it is written that the *bani* contained in the Scripture was the result of direct association with the Almighty.⁴ So, it is a revealed text and it has also been given the status of a Guru.⁵

Secondly, it is the only religious scripture in the world to which has been accorded the status of the Guru. No other religious text has been given such a status. *Bible* does not have the status of the Guru.

Similarly, *Quran* also has not been given the status of the Guru. Undoubtedly, *Vedas*, it is said are *aprusa*, i.e., have not been created or composed by any human being. The *Vedas* also are not worshipped as the Guru. The Buddhist text *Tripitka* and Jaina texts have not been given the status of the Guru. It is only *Guru Granth Sahib* which has been given the status of Guru and worshipped and revered as the Guru. For, it contains the sacred Word which basically is the Guru of Guru Nanak and of the later Gurus upto the tenth master, Guru Gobind Singh. When Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikh faith, had a dialogue with the Siddhas, he, on being asked as to who is his Guru, the great Guru Nanak Dev answering this question said that his Guru was *Sabad*, i.e., Word.⁶ To emphasise further on this point, it is written in *gurbani* that the holy Guru is his word, the word the holy Guru. And this shall show the way to liberation.⁷ Bhai Gurdas, the great poet and savant, whose interpretation of the teachings of the Gurus is held to be the most authentic, affirms thus: The Guru's word is the Guru's visible form that explicitly expresses in the holy company.⁸ He, further elaborating and reiterating the concept of *Sabad* as Guru in Sikhism, avers in his *Kabit* that within the Guru is the word, in the word the holy preceptor, the Guru. The word brings realisation of the Unattributed and the Attributed Supreme Being and confers enlightenment and meditation.⁹ So when it is the injunction of the Guru that holy Scripture, *Guru Granth Sahib* is Guru, then it is imperative that none is authorised to change it even slightly. It is the repository of divine knowledge and this divine knowledge and instruction, when followed, leads the seeker to emancipation which is the goal of human life. This release or liberation from the phenomenal existence consequently results in the knowledge of the Divine which helps one to tread on the path of both secular as well as spiritual. That is why it is said that such a human being is liberated while living in this world, i.e., *Jivan Mukht*.¹⁰ Because it is the Guru that helps man to get liberation so none is allowed to tamper or change it or its contents in any form. Prof Talib, referring to this problem, says that *Guru Granth Sahib* is the holy text and is the Guru of the Sikhs, and that is why its 'text must in no way be tampered with even in the minutest particular, which, when installed

as the sacred book, must be written down without splitting letters to form separate words.¹¹ Agreeing with these arguments of Prof Talib, emphasises Kapur Singh, "The language and the vocabulary of the Guru Granth, for good reasons, is not of a semantic positivist purely conceptual and prepositional. It is not rigorous denotative, Semantically aseptic, suitable for service and mathematics. It is not so, because it deals with modes of intellectual and sensuous reality founded not primarily on language but on other modes of communication, such as avocation of imagery, pre-intellectual and para intellectual emotive comprehension, the anaphore alliteration, tropology, anamnesis and onometopoeia. The language and vocabulary of the Guru Granth is, therefore, connotative, associative and subjective and the Guru-Granth deliberately, and by a design, uses language not "purely" but ambiguously and thus, mostly, it is not the words and their conventional meanings that are of basic significance in the Guru Granth, unless the text is intended to be theoretical and propositional, but the moss of meanings and associations and Evocative power which the words employed have gathered round them throughout their centuries of evolution and usage; by men who have experienced the non-verbal layers of reality. The poetic patina of the verbal vocabulary of the Guru Granth does not necessarily have equivalences or correspondence in the gross vocabulary of the English Language. This renders the translation of the Guru Granth more difficult than that encountered by Kumirjiva (4th-circa) while translating Mahayan texts into Chinese."¹² Prof Talib also says in this regard, "The *bani* being poetry, its grammatical structure need not conform to analytical prose." Further, it is relevant to talk about the exegesis or elaboration of *Teekakari* of Guru Granth Sahib. Prof Sahib Singh worked very hard and put many years of his life on this work. He prepared a grammar of the sacred text of Guru Granth Sahib and also prepared and completed the *Teeka* of whole of Guru Granth Sahib. But it is done on the basis of grammar, and on the root level it has been derived from Sanskrit, which is not justified for the simple reason that there are different languages included in Guru Granth Sahib. And how is it possible to have one grammar. Secondly, being revealed in its content, it is not justified to interpret it with the help of grammar

only. The revealed Text is not always composed in accordance with grammatical rules. Thirdly, and most importantly, the literary form which has been used to transmit the message is poetry. And in poetry, the grammatical rules do not necessarily apply. In this regard, emphatically avers Dr. Darshan Singh in his English version of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, "Some scholars have tried to find certain grammatical identifiable for understanding *gurbani*, therefore, they have applied them on *gurbani* to study and interpret or explain it. In this adventure, the very beginning is wrong. One, that grammar is not a discipline for poetry, much less for divine or revealed poetry. It is certainly for prose, and Guru Granth Sahib is not a piece of prose. Second, the poets of Guru Granth Sahib were not prepared even to accept the yardstick of prosody, what to talk of grammar, an irrelevant discipline for the system of their creative process. Therefore, to study a line, a couplet or a stanza of *gurbani* with tools provided by grammar and to find out the lexicons used, and the meaning of words with the tools, is not feasible."¹³

The most significant element of this Granth is that it contains the *bani* of other Sufis and saints other than the Gurus. The *bani* of Satta and Balwand, the Bhaktas such as Kabir, Namdev, Sheikh Farid, Surdas, Sain, Jaidev, Trilochan, Dhanna, Parmanand, Pipa and Beni was included in the Granth. Other than these Bhaktas, the *bani* of Bhatts was also included, who in number are seventeen. They eulogised the *Joti* (Divine spirit) enshrined in the Guru's body. It was not the encomium of the Guru body, but the praise of the Guru *Joti* which is now enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib. *Bani* of Bhikhan, Mardana, Ravi Das, Ramanand was included in this Granth. So basically the Bhatts' composition was laudatory in nature. These persons were very well-versed in Indian religious lore and had for long been attached to the Guru's household. But in the later phase of their spiritual life, they were well contented and exalted in the presence of the Guru and this intimacy of both physical as well as spiritual nature provided them the spiritual illumination and contentment which further inspired them to compose *bani*. It was undoubtedly not the laudation of a person, but the eulogisation of the *Joti* enshrined in the Physical body of the Guru, and that was the reason that their *bani* was incorporated

in the Holy Granth. To authenticate this view, Prof Talib says, "They were well-versed in the Indian religious lore and possessed a deep and intimate knowledge of the great moral and spiritual force of the Guru's teaching."¹⁴ So, basically there was this spiritual force which forced and attracted them to be in the presence of the Guru. In this sense, it is a great thing that the classical and the Oriental Indian lore could not force them to remain in the traditional line. So, they took the departure and came to the Guru's court.

It is the only Granth in the world which is written in accordance with the *Ragas*. The *Ragas* predominate throughout whole of Guru Granth. It is written in 31 *Ragas* except *Japuji* and *Ragmala*. The latter is considered to be the index of the *Ragas*. The total *Ragas* employed in Guru Granth Sahib are Sri Rag, Majh, Gauri, Asa, Gujari, Devgandhari, Bihagra, Vadhans, Sorath, Dhanasri, Jaitsari, Todi, Bhairavi, Tilang, Nat Narain, Maligaura, Suhi, Bilaval, Gaund, Ramkali, Maru, Tukhari, Kedara, Bhairon, Basant, Sarang, Malhar, Kanra, Kalyan, Parbhati, and Jaijavanti. *Vedas' Mantra* part is also recited but it is different from *gurbani* recitation. Similarly, Quranic verses are also recited but not like that of the *gurbani* and have not been composed in *Ragas*. So in this sense, it is a unique Scripture amongst the world religious scriptures.

The second prominent aspect is the message embodied in the Holy Granth which is basically enunciated in *Mul Mantra*. It is uncompromising monotheism. The *Mul Mantra* is written in the beginning of *Japu*, the first *bani* of Guru Granth Sahib, wherein the concept of one God has been propounded. The God according to this creedal formula is both *Nirguna*, i.e., unattributed and *Sarguna*, i.e., the attributed, which further indicates that this mundane manifested material expanse is emanated from the unattributed God which prior to this expanse was in an uninterrupted trance.¹⁵

The monotheism of Sikhism is not like that of the Judaism and Islam, with a personified yet transcendent God, *Jehovah* or *Allah*. So He is eternal, changeless Reality which is beyond *Maya*. He Being the Supreme Being is operating in the creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe through His *Maya*, *Lila* or *Kudrat*. He operates this world through His *Hukam* in the operational form. The term *Hukam* is of wide application, standing for the cosmic

moral force or elan called *Dharmia* for the operation of the law of retribution and the law of grace. When man performs good deeds in this world, he earns the grace of God or receives the favour of God, which leads him to attain emancipation. In this sense, he becomes free from the existential bondage and is liberated forever, being the part of God.

Further, the basic teachings include the *Naam*. It is of utmost eminence in Sikh thought. It changes the total personality of man. It transforms metal into gold. It is spiritual transformation. It is the transformation which occurs at the consciousness level. The attainment of the *Naam* is possible only through *Sabad* (Word), which is the basis of the Sikh thought. On being asked by the Siddhas that who is your Guide or Guru, Guru Nanak replied without ambiguity that *Sabad* is his Guru. *Sabad* is the only guide and *Sabad* is the source of knowledge from which spiritual knowledge or the total perfection emanates.¹⁶ And the seeker attains total absorption or union with God which otherwise is not possible. This whole existential phenomenal expanse is because of *Naam*. Guru Arjun in *Sukhmani* avers thus, "All the creatures have been created by God Himself and all the regions known and unknown are His Creation."¹⁷ Thus *Sabad* is the source of Divine illumination which when practiced helps man to attain the pinnacle of spiritual glory. In this regard, says Guru Arjun Dev, "The holy preceptor's word has lighted a lamp; from the mansion of the body is lifted darkness and a wonderful chamber opened."¹⁸ In this sense, the *Sabad* has esoteric significance, for the reason that it provides light and dispels darkness. Similarly, as opposed to Banprasta, the great Gurus emphasized the householders life, engaged in beneficent activity, keeping one's mind absorbed in contemplation and devotion. This is a great contribution of the Gurus which lays stress on the synthesis between the spiritual and the secular which means the rejection of monastic or ascetic life. That is why the Gurus rejected or disapproved the brands of mendicants of India: such as Yogis, Bairagis, Avaduts, Sanyasis, etc.

In the *Siddha Ghosti*, Guru Nanak rejects the Siddhas' way of life which emphasises the esoteric psychosomatic practices of Hatha-Yoga and its mystique. On the contrary, the Guru pointed out the sovereignty of a life centred in moral and beneficial action as fruit of

the spiritual life; without such activity, spiritual life is barren. Thus it is a revolutionary step which helped the Sikh community to change the course of Indian history.

The sixth Nanak, Guru Hargobind established the doctrine of *Miri-Piri*, i.e., temporal as well as spiritual. This combination of both the spiritual and the secular has been made for the first time in the Oriental religious thought as well as the Occidental thought. It is a unique contribution in the sense that the mundane concern has not been discarded or disapproved anywhere in Sikh thought. Guru Nanak Dev was the first Sikh Guru who raised a strong voice against the aggression of Babur and the injustice and cruelties perpetrated on the Indian people. Later the sixth Master, to counter and check the spread of Islam, established Akal Takht, symbolic of Sovereignty and political independence.

The Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh on March 30, 1699, created the order of the Khalsa to keep guard on the doctrine propounded by Sikh Guru, Guru Hargobind and to encounter the Mughal force of devastation and destruction from which the Indian people were suffering. In this way, Guru Gobind Singh mitigated the pains of the people. Sikh thought created a classless society and it provided equal status to each and everyone, especially woman for the first time was given societal freedom. Guru Nanak raised a voice against the discrimination which was being meted out to them.

He said vehemently that why to condemn women who gives birth to Kings.¹⁸ Thus, Sikh thought created a classless society, and emphasised equality of man and woman. It was a great revolutionary step taken at that time. It worked to maintain and establish the religious freedom of the people for which Guru Tegh Bahadur laid down his life. It combined both the spiritual as well as the temporal concerns of human life. These principles further helped to establish a community which checked the oncoming invaders to India, and in this way, saved both the religious and cultural 5000-years-old heritage of India. The Sikhs thus made further contribution in the political freedom of India. The Sikh thought established the doctrine of religious dialogue which helped Sikh community to spread throughout the world and, as a result, contributed to the economic growth and political environment.

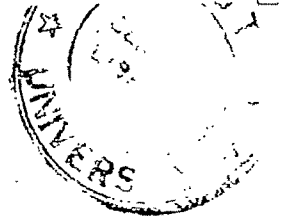
Thus opined, its impact both on the national as well as international level was of tremendous eminence.

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## DEATH PENALTY – ITS MORAL PERSPECTIVE

GURMIT SINGH\*

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The most crucial words in the abovesaid subject are, "The moral aspect". By the word "moral" we mean here, "the rules of right conduct". So we are to test our policies with respect to Death Sentence by principles of right or wrong action in the Indian context.

It is a pity that while the Indian State has enjoyed and reaped all benefits from the legacy of Buddha, Mahavira, Guru Nanak, its constitution still permits the State to commit judicial murders under the garb of public interest.

A bill for abolition of capital punishment has been introduced and discussed in the two houses of Parliament from time to time but never passed. Lok Sabha rejected it on November 23, 1956, Rajya Sabha rejected it in 1962. The reason is that the party in power does not want to surrender its weapon that enables it to eliminate its adversaries under the garb of legal legitimacy, because under Section 121 of the I.P.C. Waging war against the Government of India, punishment of death or life imprisonment are provided. This is in spite of the fact that even Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, whose legacy India flaunts, was opposed to capital punishment. He had stated that destruction of individuals can never be a virtuous act. God alone can take life because He alone gives it.

While under Article 253 of the Constitution of India, the Government of India is committed to implement its obligations under the International Treaties & Covenants signed by it, the government has failed to fulfil them under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which was signed by it in 1979. Article 6 clause (i) and (ii) of this Covenant calls upon for the abolition of death penalty.

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Even judiciary has encouraged it by holding that International Covenants have only persuasive value and are not binding. Government has failed to heed to the calls by various International Conferences that abolition of death penalty is imperative for achievement of International Standards. The most unfortunate part of the whole episode is that even highest judiciary of this country has upheld this attitude of defiance by holding in the case of Bachan Singh Versus State of Punjab that India's penal laws are in accordance with its international commitments.

A study of the decisions of the Supreme Court reveals that the highest judiciary of this country, which has no Sikh representation, since last several years when Hon'ble Mr. Justice Kuldeep Singh retired, has become insolent towards the Sikh psyche which was deeply hurt by "Operation Blue Star", which had damaged their holiest shrine through military action by the Indian Army. None of the decisions by the Apex Court has taken note of the fact that the entire Sikh community considered the assault on the Golden Temple Complex as an assault on the Sikh religion and some overzealous amongst them launched struggle for independence and the Sikh psyche was deeply hurt. In any criminal trial the psychic condition of the offender and his motive are important factors in determining the sentence but unfortunately the judges have shown least regard for the hurt Sikh psyche by the humiliation meted out to them. Rather, judiciary added fuel to the fire by justifying Operation Blue Star by saying that the military action was taken by a responsible and responsive government in the national interest. The judiciary has failed to take notice of the recognised principles of law that offences which are committed to take revenge for political persecution are political offences in which death sentence should not be awarded. Death sentence adds a hallow of martyrdom on the political offender and glorifies his execution. This encourages others to follow in his footsteps. Theory of deterrence has been found to be obsolete during recent researches on this subject. The judiciary while dealing with cases of Sikh militants has failed so far to look at the events from the angle of the offender and the revengeful psyche of the people from which Hon'ble Judges' aim has overshadowed the hurt psyche of the accused which demands compassion and human concern. The family background of a judge,

his political views, his psyche, all influence his decision and the fallability of human judgement cannot be denied even in the case of a most trained and experienced mind. Unrestricted excessive discretionary power of awarding capital punishment conferred on the judges need to be withdrawn 'or at least strictly confined to well defined boundaries and checked. All cases in which death sentence is awarded, the sentence should be made subject to confirmation by International Commission for Crimes Against Humanity which the U.N.O. should set up or at least National Human Rights Commission.

In Devinder Pal Singh's case, the death sentence has been awarded under the Terrorist And Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, although the word "terrorism" has not been defined so far. Even the United Nations and its agencies have been debating terrorism for decades, but so far have not come to an agreed definition. There are diametrically opposite perceptions. While one group considers it a worst crime against humanity, the other group glorifies it as a fight for liberation. The legal status of Sikh struggle in the end of 20th Century is yet to be determined by an International Judicial Tribunal. Until the word 'terrorism' is defined by the U.N.O. or its agencies, no country should be allowed to execute capital punishment.

Terrorist And Disruptive Activities Act under which Devinder Pal Singh has been convicted and sentenced to death is an internationally condemned inhumane legislation but even the Rules thereunder have been flouted. For example, while the Rules require the recording of a confessional statement by the recording officer "under his own hand" the confessional statement relied by the Supreme Court was recorded on a computer. Admittedly, there are discrepancies in the confessional statement of the accused. But still the learned judges have awarded capital punishment by holding that confessional statement can be relied for conviction and no further corroboration is necessary. This is not an isolated case regarding Sikhs where capital punishment has been pronounced by Indian Courts ignoring well established canons of law. Even in the case of Kehar Singh, capital punishment was executed in spite of opinion by the International Commission of Jurists that the evidence does not make out a case for conviction.

I must say that Sikh Human Rights Organisations have not put up the Sikh case in proper perspective. Insurance claims were resisted on the ground that it was an act of war. Suit for compensation is pending since long. Army officers were decorated for heroism as if it was war. Even an individual who fought by irregular means against an invading enemy is entitled to combatant status under Art 2 of the Hague Regulations and is entitled to privileges conferred on Prisoners of War when captured.

We therefore call upon the U.N.O. and the Indian State to adopt a resolution staying execution of capital punishment until a consensus is reached on the subject.

If we are sincerely committed to peace, let us stop these judicial murders being committed by the State regularly, which have failed to give security to the people.

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### IOSS LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

The Institute of Sikh Studies has launched a new website, [www.sikhinstitute.org](http://www.sikhinstitute.org). Latest information on the activities of the Institute is now available on this website. Issues of the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies* from 1999 onwards can also be accessed. Earlier issues of the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies* and the publications of the Institute will be uploaded shortly.

[ioss@sikhinstitute.org](mailto:ioss@sikhinstitute.org) is the new e-mail address of the Institute.

— Editor



## REVIVAL OF THE SIKH ETHOS – A BLUEPRINT

GAJINDAR SINGH\*

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The Singh Sabha wave generated in the last decades of the Nineteenth Century caught the imagination of the entire community and brought awareness and active participation of the common Sikhs all over the country till the thirties of the Twentieth Century. It kindled honesty and sincerity in the leaders who led the mass movement to cleanse the system of the anti-Sikh thoughts and practices, culminating in the glorious gurdwara reforms and formation of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. It was a popular movement which fired the aspirations of the Sikhs individually and on the whole, and inspired them to make exemplary sacrifices by thousands of common people of all ages, regions and professions. Unfortunately, the involvement of the common Sikhs dwindled into a false euphoria about it being a permanent solution.

The past seventy years or so posed challenges of the severest kind for the Sikh community as the settlement brought about by the British Government for the sustenance of the tiny minority like the Sikhs, by preferential treatment in the military and reservation policy in the civil services, was undone by the successor governments in free India. The community faced two holocausts in the Twentieth Century of a magnitude comparable to the holocausts of the eighteenth century, firstly in 1947-48 when India celebrated the so-called peaceful and non-violent withdrawal of the British regime and (in 1984, when thousands of Sikhs were butchered in the massacre abetted by the state and the majority community in the stage-managed pogrom in the wake of assassination of the then Prime Minister Mrs Indra Gandhi.

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It was preceded by the desecration of Darbar Sahib and other Sikh shrines. It required a steely frame to absorb the shocks, both physical and psychological to remain morally steadfast.

Throughout this period in post Singh Sabha reforms, the community was caught on the wrong foot, engrossed in a wave of consumerism and easy life standards to the total neglect of spiritual values. For more than sixty years, our rural masses considered it unnecessary to pass on the spiritual and moral standards to their pampered children who forgot the spiritual values and found refuge in drugs and alcoholism and squandered money without attaining proper education and expertise to withstand competitive edge or the traditional one-up-manship in Sikh pride.

Today we find the community in a state of confusion and bafflement requiring immediate redressal of the problem, to rekindle optimism in their spirit and positive steps to reoccupy their lost glory.

### RESOURCES

There are so many gurdwaras being constructed on a lavish scale. Let us learn a lesson from the old Hindu architectural wonders, now preserved as ruins or the disused churches in the west which are being offered for sale for non-religious usage. Unless the community prides itself in superiority of its doctrine and has willing adherents, raising of lofty monuments has no purpose. Money and resources are being misutilised and misdirected to the disadvantage of the Sikh interests. There is no dearth of funds being handled without imagination and proper thought.

### TIME AND PERIOD

A blueprint must have a period for its implementation and a step-by-step charter to achieve its set goals. A period of twenty years can be safely marked for its fructification.

### GURDWARAS

Gurdwaras were promoted by the Gurus as the central pivot of all activity, for prayers, education, physical exercises, martial training and cultural activities. Gurdwaras must be developed to become centers of all construction activities. Fancy structures are not important to spend our resources on. Funds should, instead, be utilised

for upgrading of the quality of service, on the appointment of more qualified scholars as priests with mission and urge to serve, to uplift their members of the *sangat*, to be more socially involved with the community welfare and induction of the Sikh values among elders as well as the youth. The most impressionable age is of small children, who must be attracted to the gurdwara with following facilities:

- Spiritual and historical knowledge. Libraries to be created and seminars to be arranged.
- Provision of gymnasias, where the youth can get physical training and use their time in building healthy bodies and minds. The major deficiency lies in neglect of games and tournaments in villages. Money spent on these facilities will yield a crop of enthusiastic Sikhs. Obviously, the matter has not received the attention of the SGPC which is handing over the job to traditional Babas who collect money without proper accounts or a planned manner. This does not put any financial burden on the SGPC – a short-sighted gain but destroying many things of heritage value.

### PRIESTS

The enlightened priest must maintain statistics of the Sikh population of his area, the occupation and expertise of the members to be utilised for the common benefit of his community, standard of spiritual awakening and *amritpan* and a programme. He must preach against superstitions and discourage rites like the *akband path* recited on cash basis. The priest must become an adviser and a close friend commanding communal respect. He could solve most of the problems stemming from ignorance and illiteracy. In turn, guidelines must be laid down for adequate emoluments to the gurdwara staff by the local *sangat* to attract capable scholars ensuring respectable social status to the priest and his staff.

### SUNDAY SCHOOLS

The children must be attracted to the Sunday schools with gadgets like computers, screening of historical accounts with the help of slides, which could benefit all. The priest may also train the young children in music lessons, handicrafts and other skills. The results can be imagined compared to the present emphasis on earning more money

by recital of *paths*, and free rations collected in the name of *langar* with very little salary and no respect.

The strengthening of the village gurdwara will bring back life revolving round the gurdwara and Sikh values.

### VILLAGE SCHOOLS

Regular schools are either non-functional at present or are ill equipped. There are no regular premises, not even a boundary wall resulting in animals loitering around, and without essential facilities like toilets and drinking water. The teachers are not available, are not regular or serious in duties and without missionary zeal. Missionary zeal is possible by giving them esteem and making their position financially attractive.

There was a time during the Singh Sabha movement of the early twenties when the emphasis was rightly placed on education and setting up of Khalsa Schools even when the Sikh population was meagre. Those schools had teachers with a mission and zeal to propagate values of Sikhism. Compared to the DAV Schools and the *madrassas* in the mosques, the Khalsa Schools had better educational standards and even the non-Sikhs preferred them. The students proudly proclaimed their superiority by praising their *alma maters*. Majority of these schools were lost to Pakistan. The zeal of the annual educational conferences organised by the Chief Khalsa Diwan is now a thing of the past. The SGPC- run schools are rudderless in the absence of strict inspections by educationists and experts. Nor is there a minimum standard prescribed in the management of Khalsa Schools. Today, DAV Schools are preferred by Sikh children where they also receive biased religious instructions, weaning them away from their Sikh roots. So, new schools at the primary, middle and high school should be established with the surplus gurdwara funds.

### CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT

It is required essentially to put the house in order, to set standards for the principals and teachers of Khalsa Schools to not only make them profit earning units but to impart quality education with all the emphasis on Sikh values. Teachers who are deficient in observing Sikh standards must be replaced. There should be a constituted authority to regularly inspect Khalsa Schools and upgrade them.

Each large village or a group of nearby villages must be persuaded to establish Khalsa Schools with suitable buildings and facilities and dedicated teaching staff, which in itself will yield jobs for the youth and provide the much-needed spiritual guidance to the people for education and moral development of the youth. Funds may be locally raised for the sake of better future for their own children and by persuading the Babas to donate monetary contributions towards educational activities instead of wasteful expenditure of millions on gurdwara structures. Our Babas' energies may be diverted to establish schools, colleges, hospitals, polytechnics and industrial units to provide knowledge and jobs to our youth and create further wealth for progress of the community.

A central Education Fund is the need of the hour which may periodically review the functioning of the Khalsa Schools, give financial assistance as and when required and gradually create necessary infrastructure with facilities like libraries, laboratories, and to select students on merit basis for training for competitive courses. Such a powerful body will command respect of all institutions and the community at large. We must utilise our *ragi jathas* and the influence of Sant Babas to organise special collection drives. Our village gurdwaras could be given targets to contribute apportioned funds to the Central Education Fund. It will help the youth to get trained for the selection tests of the best professions according to their capability. To look towards the government for solving our rural problems and to upgrade our children will be a wild goose chase.



*The house, in which praises are sung,  
 God's praises are sung, the Lord's praises are sung;  
 In that house ring the melodies of the five musical instruments.  
 Great destiny is writ on the forehead of him, who abides in such a home.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 1201

ਜਿਤੁ ਗ੍ਰਿਹਿ ਗੁਨ ਗਾਵਤੇ ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਗੁਨ ਗਾਵਤੇ ਰਾਮ ਗੁਨ ਗਾਵਤੇ  
 ਤਿਤੁ ਗ੍ਰਿਹਿ ਵਾਸੇ ਪੰਚ ਸਬਦ ਵਡ ਭਾਗ ਮਥੇਰਾ ॥

## SRI GUR PANTH PARKASH (TRANSLATION)

KULWANT SINGH\*

੧੪. ਹੋਰ ਪ੍ਰਸੰਗ  
(‘...ਖਾਲਸੇ ਹੋਵੈ ਖੁਦ ਖੁਦਾ...’)

14. hōr parsnga  
(‘...khālsō hōvai khud khudā...’)

ਦੋਹਰਾ : ਤਉ ਮਰੀ ਮੁਹਿ ਸੋਂ ਕਹੀ ਫਿਰ ਭਿੰਨ ਭਿੰਨ ਮੋਹਿ ਸਮਝਾਇ ।  
ਪੰਥ ਰਚਿਓ ਜਿਮ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਔਰ ਭਯੋ ਕਿਤ ਦਾਇ ।੧।

dōhrā : tau marī muhi sōn kahī phir bhinn bhinn mōhi samjhāi.  
panth rachiō jim satigurū aur bhayō kit dāi.1.

ਚੌਪਈ : ਥੀ ਤੁਰਕਨ ਕੀ ਬਡ ਪਤਿਸਾਹੀ । ਹੁਕਮ ਤੁਰਤਿ ਲੰਘ ਸੂਬੇ ਬਾਈ ।  
ਮਧ ਸਮੁੰਦਰ ਟਾਪੂ ਘਣੇ । ਦੱਖਣ ਪੂਰਬ ਪਰਬਤ ਸਣੇ ।੨।

chaupāi : thī turkan kī bad patisāhī. hukam turti langh sūbē bāi.  
madh samundar tāpū ghanē. dakkhan pūrāb parbat sanē.2.

ਰਯਤ ਹੁਤੇ ਦੇਸ ਉਨ ਸਾਰੇ । ਕਿਮ ਕਰ ਵਧ ਗਯੋ ਸਿੰਘਨ ਪਸਾਰੇ ।  
ਰਯਤ ਉਨ ਕਿਮ ਆਕੀ ਭਈ । ਤਿਨ ਕੀ ਫੌਜ ਕਹਾਂ ਥੀ ਗਈ ।੩।  
rayat hutō dēs un sārō. kim kar vadh gayō singhan pasārō.  
rayat un kim ākī bhaī. tin kī phauj kahān thī gāi.3.

ਕੈ ਉਨ ਸਿੰਘਨ ਖਬਰ ਨਾ ਪਾਈ । ਕੈ ਤੁਰਕਨ ਗੁਰੂਅਨ ਬੈਰ ਨ ਥਾਈ ।  
ਕੈ ਤੁਰਕਨ ਸਿੰਘਨ ਹੋ ਗਈ ਮੀਜਾ । ਕੈ ਉਨ ਜਾਨਯੋ ਪੰਥ ਨ ਤੀਜਾ ।੪।  
kai un singhan khabar nā pāi. kai turkan gurūan bair na thāi.  
kai turkan singhan hō gāi mījā. kai un jānyō panth na tījā.4.

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### Episode 14

#### The Khalsa Must Be Autonomous And Self-Respecting

Dohra : Then Captain Murray made further enquiries from me,  
That I must narrate the account of the Sikhs in minute detail.  
How did the Tenth Guru create the order of the Khalsa Panth?  
What kind of strategies did he employ to promote this order? (1)

Chaupai : The Mughal empire was very vast and mighty,  
With their writ running all over the twenty two provinces.  
It stretched upto various islands in the midst of ocean,  
Over the mountineous regions both in the East and the South. (2)

When the whole populace of India constituted their subjects,  
How did the Sikhs alone manage to expand their influence?  
How did the subjects of this region (Punjab) put up a defiance to  
their rule?  
Where had the Mughal's Army disappeared to allow this defi-  
ance? (3)

Were the Mughals not well informed about the Sikhs?  
Were they ignorant about the hostility between them and the Sikh  
Gurus?  
Had they reached some kind of settlement with the Sikhs?  
Had they accepted the Sikhs as the third religion? (4)

ਕੈ ਉਨ ਮੈਂ ਨ ਥੋ ਕੋਊ ਸਯਾਨੋਂ । ਤੋਂ ਉਨ ਨਾਹਿ ਸਿੰਘਨ ਹੋਤ ਪਛਾਨੋਂ ।  
 ਕੈ ਪੰਥ ਚਕਯੋ ਨ ਦਾਵੇ ਪਤਸਾਹੀ । ਕੈ ਉਨ ਤੈ ਪੰਥ ਭਯੋ ਲੁਕਾਹੀ ।੫।  
 kai un main na thō kōū sayānōn. tau un nāhi singhan hōt pachhānō.  
 kai panth chakyō na dāvō patsāhī. kai un tai panth bhayō lukāhī.5

ਦੋਹਰਾ : ਜਿਮ ਤਿਸ ਉੱਤਰ ਮੈਂ ਦਯੋ ਸੁਨੋਂ ਸੋਊ ਗੁਰ ਸਿੱਖ ।  
 ਜਨਮਤਿ ਲੁਕਯੋ ਨ ਪੰਥ ਯਹ ਦਭ ਸੂਲਨ ਜਿਉਂ ਮੁਖ ਤਿੱਖ ।੬।  
 dōhrā : jim tis uttar main dayō sunōn sōū gur sikkha.  
 janmatī lukyō na panth yah dabh sūlan jiun mukh tikkha.6

ਚੌਪਈ : ਸਿੰਘਨ ਪੰਥ ਕਬ ਲੁਕ ਛਿਪ ਹੋਯੋ । ਸਿੰਘਨ ਪੰਥ ਕਬ ਲੁਕੈ ਲੁਕੋਯੋ ।  
 ਸਿੰਘਨ ਪੰਥ ਦੰਗੈ ਕੋ ਭਇਓ । ਸਿੰਘਨ ਜਨਮ ਸੰਗ ਸ਼ਸਤ੍ਰਨ ਲਇਓ ।੭।  
 chaupāī : singhan panth kab luk chhip hōyō. singhan panthu kab lukai lukōyō.  
 singhan panth dangai kō bhaiō. singhan janam sang shastarn laiō.7.

ਸਿੰਘਨ ਪਾਹੁਲ ਖੰਡੇ ਕੀ ਦਈ । ਸਿੰਘਨ ਗੁਰੂਤੀ ਖੰਡੇ ਕੀ ਲਈ ।  
 ਸਿਰ ਪਰ ਚੱਕਰ ਕਰਦੈਂ ਧਾਰੈਂ । ਕਦ ਵਹ ਲੁਕੈਂ ਜਿਮ ਸ਼ੇਰ ਨਖ ਵਾਰੈਂ ।੮।  
 singhan pāhul khandē kī dāī. singhan gurdhī khandē kī lāī.  
 sir par chakkar kardain dhārain. kad vah lukain jim shēr nakh vārain.8.

ਪੰਥ ਰਚਯੋ ਇਮ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪੂਰੇ । ਦੰਗੇ ਖਾਤਰ ਕਰਨ ਜਰੂਰੇ ।  
 ਬਿਨ ਚੁੱਧੈ ਕਬ ਪਯਤ ਪਤਿਸਾਹੀ । ਆਦਿ ਚੁੱਧੈ ਬਿਧ ਗੁਰੂ ਉਠਾਈ ।੯।  
 panth rachyō im satigur pūrē. dangē khātar karan jarūrē.  
 bin juddhai kab payat patishāhī. ādī juddhai bidh gurū uthāī.9.

ਦੋਹਰਾ : ਗੁਰੂਅਨ ਮੱਧ ਪਤਿਸਾਹ ਤੇ ਵਧਯੋ ਹੁਤੋ ਥੋ ਬੈਰ ।  
 ਗੁਰੂ ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਸਿਰ ਦਯੋ ਉਨਿ ਸਿਖ ਕਰੈਂ ਕਿਮ ਖੈਰ ।੧੦।  
 dōhrā : gurūan maddh patishāh tē vadhyō hutō thō baira.  
 gurū tēg bahādar sir dayō uni sikh karain kim khairā.10.

ਚੌਪਈ : ਗੁਰ ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦ੍ਰ ਦੇਹ ਦਿੱਲੀ ਲਾਈ । ਦਿੱਲੀ ਪਤ ਉਨ੍ਹ ਜੜਹਿ ਉਖੜਾਈ ।  
 ਗੁਰ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਸੋ ਲਖ ਲਈ । ਅਬ ਤੁਰਕਨ ਜੜ੍ਹ ਥੋ ਸੁਕ ਭਈ ।੧੧।  
 chaupāī : gur tēg bahādar dēh dillī lāī. dillī pat unah jardhi ukhrdāī.  
 gur gōbind singh sō lakh lāī. ab turkan jardah thō suk bhaī.11.



Wasn't there any politically shrewd person among the Mughals,  
Who could pinpoint the rising power of the Sikhs?  
Did the Khalsa Panth not stake their claim to sovereignty?  
Did the Khalsa Panth remain unnoticed by the Mughals? (5)

Dohra : The way I answered these questions put forth by Captain Murray,  
My Gursikh readers must listen to the same account.  
The Khalsa Panth was as sharp and marked since its inception,  
As tender thorns are sharp and pointed from their budding stage. (6)

Chaupai : How could the Khalsa Singhs<sup>2</sup> remain existent in isolation and secrecy?  
How could the Khalsa Panth remain hidden from the public gaze?  
The Singhs' organisation was created to wage a war,  
As the Khalsa Panth was anointed with the touch of weapons. (7)

The Khalsa Panth was initiated (Baptised)<sup>3</sup> with the ceremonial sword as,  
The Khalsa Panth was administered the first draught of the sword  
immersed in elixir.

With steel rings and sword on their headgear and slung across the  
shoulders,  
How could they remain unnoticed like the sharp-nailed lions in a  
jungle? (8)

The perfect Guru the Tenth created the Khalsa Panth in this manner,  
So that they must wage a war against oppression.  
Since no body achieves sovereignty without waging a war,  
The Tenth Guru had decided this strategy from the very begin-  
ning. (9)

Dohra : There had developed a great hostility and conflict,  
Between the Sikh Gurus and the Mughal emperor.  
Since Guru Tegh Bahadur had sacrificed his life for this reason,  
How could the Sikhs let the Mughals get away with it? (10)

Chaupai : Guru Tegh Bahadur, by making the Supreme sacrifice at Delhi,  
Had uprooted the Mughal Emperor's roots from Delhi.  
Guru Gobind Singh had made a proper assessment that,  
The roots (foundations) of the Mughal empire's had completely  
withered. (11)

ਪਰ ਕਟੈ ਪਕੈ ਬਿਨ ਗਿਰੈ ਸੁ ਨਾਹਿ । ਅਕੈ ਗਿਰੇ ਵਡ ਪੋਣ ਵਗਾਹਿ ।  
 ਅਬ ਇਨ ਪਰ ਪੋਣ ਖੰਡੇ ਚਲਵਯੈ । ਮਾਰ ਇਸੈ ਢਬ ਇਨੈਂ ਗਿਰਯੈ । ੧੨ ।  
 par katai pakai bin girai su nāhi. akai girē vad paun vagāhi.  
 ab in par paun khandē chalvayai. mār isai dhab inain giriyai. 12.

ਤੋ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਨਿਜ ਫੜ ਤਲਵਾਰ । ਅਬ ਲੋਯੈ ਪਤਿਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਤੁਰਕਨ ਮਾਰ ।  
 ਫਿਰ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਚਿਤ ਐਸ ਬਿਚਾਰੀ । ਹਮ ਕਯਾ ਕਰਨੀ ਪਤਿਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਨਿਕਾਰੀ । ੧੩ ।  
 tau satigur nij phard talvāra. ab layyai patishāhī turkan māra.  
 phir satigur chit ais bichārī. ham kayā karnī patishāhī nikārī. 13.

ਸ੍ਰੀ ਨਾਨਕ ਗੱਦੀ ਹਮ ਚਹਿੰ ਘਰੀ । ਜਿਸੈ ਪਤਿਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਚਰਨੀ ਪਰੀ ।  
 ਹਮੈਂ ਪਤਿਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਕੀ ਕਯਾ ਪਰਵਾਹਿ । ਦੇਂ ਪਤਿਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਨਫਰਨ ਉਠਾਇ । ੧੪ ।  
 srī nānak gaddī ham chahin gharī. jisai patishāhī charnī parī.  
 hamain patishāhī kī kayā parvāhi. dēn patishāhī nafran uthāi. 14.

ਦੋਹਰਾ : ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਚਿਤ ਮਧ ਇਮ ਠਟੀ ਦਈਐ ਰਾਜਨ ਰਾਜ ਉਠਾਇ ।  
 ਸਭ ਰਾਜਨ ਏ ਪਰਬਤੀ ਦਯੈ ਖੰਡੇ ਫੜਵਾਇ । ੧੫ ।

dōhrā : satigur chit madh im thatī dāīai rājan rāj uthāi.  
 sabh rājan ē parbatī dayai khandō phardvāi. 15.

ਚੌਪਈ : ਫਿਰ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਚਿਤ ਸੋਝੀ ਆਈ । ਏਹ ਕਬ ਸਿੱਖ ਬਨੈਂ ਹਮ ਆਈ ।  
 ਮੁਖਤ ਨਿਆਮਤ ਇਨ ਕਿਮ ਦੱਯੈ । ਕਿਮ ਪੁਤ ਬਿਗਾਨੇ ਮੁੱਖ ਚੁਮਾਯੈ । ੧੬ ।

chaupai : phir satigur chit sōjhī ā. ēh kab sikkh banain ham ā.  
 mukhat niāmat in kim dayyai. kim put bigānē mukkh chumyyai. 16.

ਏਹ ਪੱਥਰ ਪੂਜਕ ਭਿੱਜ ਨ ਨੀਰੋ । ਓਇ ਆਦਿ ਅਕ੍ਰਿਤਘਣ ਘਰ ਗੁਰ ਤੀਰੋ ।  
 ਰਜਪੂਤ ਸਦਾਵੈਂ ਆਪ ਸਿਪਾਹੀ । ਓਇ ਕਹੈਂ ਕਦੋਂ ਗੁਰ ਦਈ ਪਤਿਸ਼ਾਹੀ ।  
 ਅਬ ਦਯੋ ਪਤਿਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਗਰੀਬਨ ਉਠਾਇ । ਵੈ ਜਾਨੈ ਗੁਰ ਦਈ ਹੈ ਮਾਇ । ੧੮ ।  
 ēh patthar pūjak bhijj na nīrō. ōi ādi akritghan ghar gur tīrō.  
 rajpūt sadāvain āp sipāhī. ōi kahain kadōn gur dāi patishāhī.  
 ab dayau patshāhī garīban uthāi. vai jānai gur dāi hai māi. 18.

ਦੋਹਰਾ : ਦਯੀ ਚੀਜ ਚਹੈ ਗ੍ਰੀਬ ਕਉ ਕਿਉਂ ਅਤਿ ਦਯੋ ਅਖਾਇ ।  
 ਯਹਿ ਦਯਾਵਾਨ ਘਰ ਗੁਰੂ ਕੇ ਅਰ ਗ੍ਰੀਬ ਨਿਵਾਜ ਅਖਵਾਇ । ੧੯ ।

dōhrā : dayī chīj chahai garīb kau kiun ati dayō akhāi.  
 yahi dayāvān ghar gurū kō ar garīb nivāj akhvāi. 19.

But even an old tree does not fall down without its roots being cut,  
Or else a mighty storm could bring it tumbling down.

Now the Mughal empire needed to be stormed with an armed attack,  
This was the only way to bring this crumbling empire down. (12)

So Satguru Guru Gobind Singh himself decided to pick up the sword,  
And bring about the destruction of the Mughal empire.

But then Guru Gobind Singh felt in his heart of hearts,  
That he himself had no need for a worthless royal power. (13)

Sri Guru Nanak had blessed him with such a great divine seat,  
That all of Temporal royal power was subservient to it.  
Since he did not care for such an inferior temporal power,  
He must pass on this kind of political power to his subordinates. (14)

Dohra : Thereafter it occurred to Satguru Guru Gobind Singh's mind,  
That the reign of Mughal rulers must be replaced.  
For this purpose, all the chiefs of the hill states,  
Must be made to pick up the sword against the Mughals. (15)

Chaupai : But then on a second thought, Guru Gobind Singh thought,  
That these hill chiefs had never been his followers.  
Why should he invest them with rare power without any service?  
Why should he embrace these outsiders at the cost of his own  
followers? (16)

They are as indifferent as the stone idols that they worship,  
And they had always been ungrateful to the House of Nanak.  
As they called themselves soldiers and as belonging to martial races,  
They would never acknowledge that the Guru had conferred power  
on them.

He would confer power and sovereignty on the poor people,  
Who would gratefully acknowledge his (Guru's) contribution. (18)

Dohra : The needy alone deserve to be endowed with rare gifts,  
What is the use of empowering those who are already powerful.  
The House of Nanak is known for its compassion and generosity,  
And known as the saviour and protector of the poor. (19)

- ਚੌਪਈ : ਸਤ ਸਨਾਤਿ ਐ ਬਾਰਹ ਜਾਤ । ਜਾਨ ਨਹਿ ਰਾਜਨੀਤੀ ਕੀ ਬਾਤ ।  
ਜੱਟ ਬੂਟ ਕਹਿੰ ਜਿਹ ਜਗ ਮਾਂਗੀ । ਬਣੀਏ ਬਕਾਲ ਕਿਰਾੜ ਖੜ੍ਹੀ ਸਦਾਈ । ੨੦ ।
- chaupaī : sat sanāti au bārah jāta. jān nahi rājnīti kī bāta.  
jatt būt kahin jinh jag mānhī. banīē bakāl kirārd khattī sadāi.20.

ਲੁਹਾਰ ਤ੍ਰਖਾਣ ਹੁਤ ਜਾਤ ਕਮੀਨੀ । ਛੀਪੋ ਕਲਾਲ ਨੀਚਨ ਪੈ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕੀਨੀ ।  
ਗੁੱਜਰ ਗੁਰ ਹੀਰ ਕਮਜਾਤ । ਕੰਬੋਇ ਸੂਦਨ ਕੋਇ ਪੁਛੈ ਨ ਬਾਤ । ੨੧ ।

luhār tarkhān hut jāt kamīnī. chhīpō-kalāl nīchan pai karipā kīnī.  
gujjar gavār hīr kamjāta. kambōi sūdan kōi puchhai na bāta.21.

ਝੀਵਰ ਨਾਈ ਰੋੜੇ ਘੁਮਿਆਰ । ਸਾਇਣੀ ਸੁਨਿਆਰੇ ਚੂੜੇ ਚਮਿਆਰ ।  
ਭੱਟ ਐ ਬਾਹਮਣ ਹੁਤੇ ਮੰਗਵਾਰ । ਬਹੁਰੁਪੀਏ ਲੁਬਾਣੇ ਐ ਘੁਮਿਆਰ । ੨੨ ।

jhīvar nāi rōrdē ghumiāra. sāinī suniārē chūrdhē chamiāra.  
bhatt au bāhman hutē mangvāra. bahurūpīē lubānē au ghumiāra.22.

ਇਨ ਗਰੀਬਨ ਹਮ ਦਯੈ ਪਤਿਸਾਹੀ । ਏ ਯਾਦ ਰਖੈ ਹਮਰੀ ਗੁਰਿਆਈ ।  
ਤੋ ਸਦਿ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਸਿਖ ਲਲਕਾਰੇ । ਫੜੋ ਸ਼ਸਤ੍ਰਨ ਲਿਹੁ ਤੁਰਕਨ ਮਾਰੇ । ੨੩ ।

in garībān ham dayai patisāhī. ē yād rakhain hamrī guriāi.  
tau sadi satigur sikh lalkārē. phardō shastarn lihu turkan mārē.23.

- ਦੋਹਰਾ : ਤੋ ਗਰੀਬ ਸਿੱਖਨ ਨੇ ਨਹਿੰ ਮਨਯੋ ਤੁਰਕਨ ਤੇ ਮੋਢ ਕੀਨ ।  
ਉਨ ਪਹਿ ਫੌਜੈ ਅਤਿ ਘਨੀ ਕਬ ਛੋਡੈ ਰਾਜ ਜਮੀਨ । ੨੪ ।
- dōhrā : tau garīb sikkhan nē nahin manyō turkan tē khauph kīna.  
un pahi phaujain ati ghanī kab chhōdāin rāj jamīna.24.

- ਚੌਪਈ : ਤੋ ਸਿੱਖਨ ਯੋ ਮੰਨੀ ਨ ਬਾਤ । ਹਮ ਤੇ ਤੁਰਕ ਕਬ ਮਾਰੇ ਜਾਤ ।  
ਅਸੀਂ ਚਿਰੀਆ ਵੈ ਸਾਨੀ ਬਾਜ । ਹਮ ਛੇਲ ਵੈ ਬਘਯਾੜਨ ਸਾਜ । ੨੫ ।
- chaupaī : tau sikkhan yau mannī na bāta. ham tē turak kab mārē jāta.  
asīn chirīā vai sānī bāja. ham chhēlai vai baghyārdan sāja.25.

Chaupai : Those who belong to the various offshoots of lowly twelve sub-castes,  
And who know nothing about the game of power politics.  
Who are contemptuously known as rustic peasants, in the society,  
OR known as traders, small time shopkeepers and petty fighters. (20)

Those who belong to the low castes of blacksmiths and carpenters,  
And the lowly placed tailors and wine-vendors would receive his  
benediction.

This fraternity will also include the low caste cattle grazers, rustics,  
and cow herds,  
And the ignoble vegetable growers (Kambojs) and scheduled  
castes. (21)

Water-carriers, Barbers, small vendors, potters will also join this  
community,

Sainis, goldsmiths, sweepers and cobblers will form a part of this  
brotherhood.

Ballad-singers, priests, and mendicants will also be the alliance  
partners,

Salt-traders, potters and artisans will also share power. (22)

I shall confer sovereignty on these poor and needy Gursikhs,  
So that they may remember my patronage and benediction.  
Saying this Guru Gobind Singh challenged his followers,  
That they should pick up swords and attack the Mughals. (23)

Dohra : The Sikhs did not agree to Guru Gobind Singh's proposal,  
Since they were highly scared of the Mughal empire's power.  
The Mughals had a large and powerful army,  
How would they relinquish power and their hold over India? (24)

Chaupai : So the Sikhs did not accept Guru Gobind Singh's advice,  
As they felt that they would not be able to defeat the Mughals.  
The Sikhs were just timid sparrows as compared to the Hawk-like Mughals,  
Or The Sikhs were just lambs against the lion-like Mughals. (25)

ਤੁਮ ਮ੍ਰਿਗਨ ਤੇ ਕਿਮ ਸ਼ੇਰ ਮ੍ਰਵਾਵੇ । ਲੋਤੀ ਕੇ ਪਾਣੀ ਮਗਰੀ ਪਰ ਚੜ੍ਹਾਵੇ ।  
ਵਹੁ ਆਦ ਸਿਪਾਹੀ ਮੁਗਲ ਪਠਾਨ । ਹਮ ਜੱਟ ਬੂਟ ਨਾਈ ਤਰਖਾਣ ।੨੬।  
tum marigan tē kim shēr marvāvō. lautī kō pānī magrī par chardhāvō.  
vahu ād sipāhī mugāl pathāna. ham jatt būt nāi tarkhāna.26.

ਤੁਮ ਟੋਲੇ ਸਭ ਜਾਤ ਕਮੀਨ । ਹੁਤੇ ਜੋਊ ਸਭ ਸਸਤਰ ਹੀਨ ।  
ਕੋਈ ਲਲਕਾਰੇ ਰਜਪੂਤਹਿ ਰਾਜੈ । ਜੋਊ ਸਵਾਰੈ ਤੁਮਰੇ ਕਾਜੈ ।੨੭।  
tum tōlē sabh jāt kamīna. hutē jōū sabh sasatar hīna.  
kōī lalkārō rajpūthi rājai. jōū savārain tumrō kājain.27.

ਦੋਹਰਾ : ਤੈ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਸੋਚਿਓ ਕਯਾ ਯਹ ਸਿੱਖਨ ਕੀਨ ।  
ਹਮ ਚਹਿੰ ਦੇਂ ਪਤਿਸਾਹੀ ਸਿੱਖਨ ਉਨ ਨੈ ਨਾਹਿ ਨਾਹਿ ਕੀਨ ।੨੮।  
dōhrā : tau srī satigur sōchiō kayā yah sikkhan kīna.  
ham chahin dēn patisāhī sikkhan un nai nāhi nāhi kīna.28.

ਚੌਪਈ : ਹੁਤੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਜਾਣੀ ਜਾਣ । ਸਭੀ ਬਿਧੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਲਈ ਪਛਾਣ ।  
ਯਹ ਚਰਣ ਪਹੁਲ ਹੈ ਸ਼ਾਂਤ ਸਰੂਪ । ਤੇਜ ਨਾਹਿ ਯਹਿ ਮਾਂਹਿ ਅਨੂਪ ।੨੯।  
chaupai : hutō gurū srī jānī jāna. sabhī bidhī gurū lai pachhāna.  
yah charan pahul hai shānt sarūpa. tēj nāhi yahi mānhi anūpa.29.

ਦੋਹਰਾ : ਸੇਹਲੀ ਟੋਪੀ ਸਿਰ ਧਰੈਂ ਦਾਸਹਿ ਨਾਮ ਕਹਾਇ ।  
ਹੁਤੀ ਦਯਾ ਮਧ ਰੂਪ ਬਹੁ ਇਮ ਨਹਿੰ ਸ਼ਸਤ੍ਰ ਫੜਾਇ ।੩੦।  
dōhrā : sēhli tōpī sir dharain dāsahi nām kahāi.  
hutī dayā madh rūp bahu im nahin shastar phardāi.30.

ਚੌਪਈ : ਅਬ ਸਿੱਖਨ ਰੂਪ ਪਲਟਾਈਐ । ਤੇਜ ਧਾਰੀ ਜਿਮ ਲਖ ਭੋ ਖਾਈਐ ।  
ਤੇਜ ਨਾਮ ਕੋਊ ਇਨੈ ਧਰੋਯੈ । ਕਰ ਪਾਹੁਲ ਇਨੈਂ ਤੇਜ ਪਿਲੋਯੈ ।੩੧।  
chaupai : ab sikkhan rūp paltāīai. tēj dhārī jim lakh bhau khāīai.  
tēj nām kōū inai dharyyai. kar pāhul inain tēj pilyyai.31.

ਯੈ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਚਿਤ ਲਯੋ ਧਾਰ । ਸੋ ਉਦਮ ਕੀਓ ਗੁਰੂ ਬਿਚਾਰ ।  
ਛਤ੍ਰੀ ਰੂਪ ਸੁੰਦਰ ਅਤਿ ਲਾਗੇ । ਕੇਸ ਸੀਸ ਸਿਰ ਬਾਂਧੈ ਪਾਗੇ ।੩੨।  
yau satigur srī chit layau dhāra. sō uddam kīō gurū bichāra.  
chhatrī rūp sundar atī lāgē. kēs sīs sir bāndhai pāgē.32.

How could the Guru expect deer-like Sikhs to vanquish the lion-like Mughal forces?

How could a downward flowing rivulet flow back towards the high-sloped mountains?

Their forces consisted of veteran soldiers and warrior Pathans.  
While the Sikhs Constituted poor unskilled rustics, barbers and carpenters. (26)

They told the Guru that he had selected all the low-caste people,  
Who were completely defenceless and unarmed.

He should throw this challenge before the martial royal chiefs,  
As they were the right persons who could serve his purpose. (27)

Dohra : Then Sri Guru Gobind Singh felt anguished and thought,  
That his followers did not wish to achieve anything in life.  
He had wished to confer power and sovereignty on them,  
But they were repeatedly refusing to accept this honour. (28)

Chaupai : Sri Guru Gobind Singh, being an expert omniscient psychoanalyst,  
Had diagnosed the root cause of his Sikh's psychic malady.  
Since these Sikhs had been peaceful followers of a Charan Pahul<sup>4</sup> tradition,  
There was no spark of self-assertion and retaliation in their psyche. (29)

Dohra : They had been used to wearing a black woolen silken cap as head cover,  
As they had been indoctrinated to call themselves as servants or slaves,  
They being grounded in excessive compassion and humility,  
It would be futile to ask them to pick up swords. (30)

Chaupai : He should first bring about a transformation in their character,  
And make their appearance formidable that evokes fear and awe.  
He should give his organisation a charismatic nomenclature,  
And administer a heavy dose of heady elixir to them. (31)

So Satguru Sri Guru Gobind Singh arrived at a firm resolution,  
And made efforts to implement it after deep contemplation.  
They must adopt the dress code of a martial warrior race,  
And grow hair and wear turbans on their heads. (32)

ਨਾਮ ਸਿੰਘ ਹੁਤੋ ਛਤਰੀਅਨ ਕੇਰੋ । ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰ ਜਾਨਯੋ ਯਹੀ ਭਲੇਰੋ ।  
 ਖੰਡੇ ਪਾਹੁਲ ਚਿਤ ਮਧ ਠਟੀ । ਇਮ ਹੋਵੋਗੋ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਹਠੀ ।੩੩।  
 nām singh hutō chhatrīan kērō. srī gur jānyō yahī bhalērō.  
 khandai pāhul chit madh thatī. im hōvōgō khālsā hathī.33.

ਪੜੇ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੀ ਇਮ ਇਨ ਖੋਇ । ਹੰਨੇ ਹੰਨੇ ਹਮ ਪਤਿਸ਼ਾਹ ਹੋਇ ।  
 ਕਾਣ ਕੂਟ ਵਾਂਗ ਲੋਹੇ ਕਰੈ । ਖੰਡੇ ਪਾਹੁਲ ਪੀ ਖੰਡਯੋ ਨ ਟਰੈ ।੩੪।  
 pardē pātisāhī im in khōi. hannē hannē ham patishāh hōi.  
 kān kūṭ vāng lōhē karain. khandē pāhul pī khandyōn na tarain.34.

ਦੋਹਰਾ : ਖਾਲਸੇ ਹੋਵੈ ਖੁਦ ਖੁਦਾ ਜਿਮ ਖੂਬੀ ਖੂਬ ਖੁਦਾਇ ।  
 ਆਨ ਨ ਮਾਨੈ ਆਨ ਕੀ ਇਕ ਸੱਚੇ ਬਿਨ ਪਤਿਸ਼ਾਹ ।੩੫।

dōhrā : khālsō hōvai khud khudā jim khūbī khūb khudāi.  
 ān na mānai ān kī ik sachchē bin patishāha.35.

ਚੌਪਈ : ਭੂਤ ਪ੍ਰੇਤ ਔ ਮੜੀ ਮਸਾਣ । ਨਹਿੰ ਮਾਨੈ ਵਹਿ ਗੁਗੋ ਸੁਲਤਾਨ ।  
 ਟਿੱਕੋ ਜਨੇਊ ਪਹਿਰੈ ਨ ਧੋਤੀ, ਇਕ ਸੁਨਹਿਰੇ ਖਾਹਿੰ ਗਹੁ ਗੋਤੀ ।੩੬।

chaupaī : bhūt parēt au mardhī masāna. nahin mānai vahi gugō sultāna.  
 tikkō janēū pahirain na dhōṭī, ik sunahirē khāhin gahu gōṭī.36.



## REFERENCES

- 1 Panthan Teeja or Third Religion : The reference is to the emergence of the Khalsa Panth as a third religion, the other two existing main religious being Hinduism and Islam.
- 2 The Singhs: with their blue uniforms, flowing beards and turbans on their heads and armed with weapons could not remain unspotted and anonymous in a crowd. This reference is to their unique and conspicuous dress.
- 3 Initiation: Reference to the creation of the Khalsa Panth through an initiation ceremony (Amrit Pahul) – specially prepared sweetened water called Amrit (Elixir) by stirring it with the ceremonial double-edged dagger in the midst of the chanting of Gurbani hymns and administered to the chosen first five Sikhs by Guru Gobind Singh himself. Later on, this ceremony of initiation could be performed at any place by the five initiated Sikhs. This is a ritual for self-purification and for taking a vow to lead a clean, moral life dedicated to one's religion.
- 4 Charan Pahul : Before the Sikhs were turned into Singhs and organised as

*contd on page 67...*



The warrior Kshatriyas had been suffixing the epithet "Singhs"  
 The same suffix "Singh" would suit his followers' names as well.  
 He resolved to administer them the "Khandey-ki-Pahul"<sup>5</sup>,  
 In order to make the Khalsa formidable and resolute. (33)

In this way, they would learn the art of wielding power,  
 And develop a feeling of having become rulers and sovereigns.  
 From people weak as straw and reeds, he would turn them into  
 men of steel,  
 After partaking of sword-initiated elixir, they would not be scared to  
 pick up swords. (34)

⌘ Dohra : The Khalsa must be as autonomous and self-respecting,  
 As embodiment of all the Divine attributes in plenty.  
 Never submitting to the sovereignty of anyone else,  
 Except the sovereignty and autonomy of God alone. (35)

Chaupai : Henceforth, the Khalsa would not worship any spirits and graves  
 of Pirs,  
 Nor would they be worshippers of "Gugapir Sultan"<sup>6</sup>.  
 They would no longer wear saffron mark, sacred thread or lose  
 apparel (dhoti),  
 Eliminating all caste distinctions, they would dine together. (36)

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an organised religion "The Khalsa Panth" by Guru Gobind Singh on the Vaisakhi day of 1699 through the initiation (Baptism) ceremony by administering them Amrit known as Khandey-ki-Pahul, the earlier tradition of bringing a person into the Sikh fold was through the administering of water made sacred by the touch of a thumb of Guru's feet. These Sikhs were known as "Charan Pahulias". Guru Gobind Singh discontinued this tradition after introducing the ceremony of administering Khandey ki Pahul. This historical event brought about a complete transformation in the collective psyche of the Sikhs and made them a force to reckon with.

5 Khandey-ki-Pahul: op. cit., page 81.

6 Guga Pir Sultan : His real name was Sayyad Ahmad. He is counted among the Muslim Pirs known by various names such as Sakhi sarwar, Lakhdada, Lalanwala. People offer big size bread loaves known as "Rotes" on every Thursday to seek his blessings and pray for fulfilment of their wishes.

## SRI GUR PANTH PARKASH

KHARAK SINGH

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Rattan Singh Bhangoo's *magnum opus*, *Sri Gur Panth Prakash*, occupies a unique position among the primary sources of Sikh history. His account of the Guru period concentrates on Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh, following the *Janamsakhi* tradition for the former and *Bachittar Natak* for the latter two Gurus. He makes only a passing reference to the other *patshahis*. However, his narration of the origin and rise of the Khalsa during the eighteenth century is original and fairly comprehensive. In fact, there is no other original and reliable source for this period. The accounts given by the Mughal rulers, were highly biased and derogatory, and showed the Sikhs as outlaws and criminals interested only in trouble making. Far from showing them as saint-soldiers fighting for freedom and human rights and defence of the weak and the downtrodden, they painted them as devils with no legitimate claim to power and authority. It was, therefore, decided by the research committee of the Institute of Sikh Studies to take up the work of translating into English, this great Punjabi epic which gives a true account of the happenings of the 18th century.

As explained by the author of this epic, the British who had already occupied a large part of the Indian sub-continent, wanted to know how the Sikhs, coming from poor and helpless subjects of a ruthless empire, had risen to power and authority, overthrowing the mighty Mughal rulers. It was necessary for them to understand this, for they had their eyes on the Punjab also. For this, they knew they would have to confront the Khalsa. The East India Company Governor General's Agent, General David Ochterlony, had gathered some information through the Mughal Emperor, Farrukh Siyar, and also commissioned one Maulvi Bute Shah of Batala, through his

representative at Ludhiana, Captain David Murray, to write a history of the Sikhs. His report not only confirmed the earlier Mughal version, but was even more damaging. It was at this stage that Captain Murray came into contact with Rattan Singh Bhangoo, and sought his opinion on Bute Shah's account. As expected, it was highly biased and distorted, and made no mention of the sacrifices made by the Sikh Gurus and their countless Sikhs defending the defenceless people and the lofty moral and spiritual ideals preached by Guru Nanak and his successor Gurus. Bhangoo told him all this, and added that Maulvi Bute Shah was a Musalman, and was not expected to shower praise on the Sikhs.

Captain Murray then asked him the pointed question, "How did the Sikhs establish their rule, and who gave them sovereignty?" Bhangoo replied that it was Guru Nanak, the True Emperor (*Sachcha Patshah*) who had conferred sovereignty on the Khalsa. This epic is, in fact, an elaboration of this brief answer to Murray's crucial question. It is the history of the struggle waged by the Khalsa to end the tyrannical foreign rule and to win freedom for their sacred motherland. It is an eye-witness account of the supreme sacrifices made by countless martyrs like Bhai Mani Singh, Bhai Mehtab Singh, Sukha Singh, Bhai Taru Singh, Baba Gurbakhsh Singh, etc., whom the Sikhs remember everyday in their congregational prayers. But for this great epic written by Bhangoo, this great heritage, which has inspired and continues to inspire the Sikhs, generation after generation, would have been lost.

Rattan Singh Bhangoo was in a unique position to record the episodes narrated in the epic, since he had firsthand information on these events through his father and grandfather, who were active participants in the high drama of Sikh history during the 18th century. On the maternal side also his grandfather, Sardar Shyam Singh was the Chief of the Karoresinghia Misl. Bhangoo was also related to the famous court poet of Guru Gobind Singh, Sainapat. With these connections, he was in touch with the current developments in high circles of the Panth, and had access to the oral history of his and the earlier times. He fully availed himself of this unique position, and has produced an epic which is testimony to the glory of the Panth as well as to his own greatness as a historian, an epic writer and a devoted Sikh.

The epic was discovered and first published by Bhai Vir Singh in 1914, and has since seen four editions. The SGPC published an edited version of this *granth* in 1984, with suitable comments and explanations,

which has been adopted as basis for this translation. Access to this great epic has so far been limited to Punjabi-knowing readers only. The vast English-knowing audiences have, however, remained unaware of this great epic, and have thus been deprived of the inspiration it provides. To meet this keenly felt need, the Institute of Sikh Studies decided to produce an English translation. Prof Kulwant Singh, who was commissioned to do it, has done an excellent job, and its Volume I with eighty one episodes is ready. The second volume will follow soon, which will conclude the story of the origin of the Khalsa and its rise to power, as recorded by Rattan Singh Bhangoo.

Prof Kulwant Singh has added a detailed Introduction, which greatly enhances the value of this publication. He has described this work as an epic comparable to some of the best ones in the Eastern as well as Western classical literature. There is one difference, however, that Bhangoo's epic is based on history, unlike some of the others which are largely mythological, or reflect the authors' imagination, unrelated to any historical facts.

Bhangoo wrote this epic in Punjabi verse. He was, however, well-versed in Persian and Sanskrit also. This is clear from the liberal use of vocabulary from these languages in the text. Apart from the accuracy and vividness of the account given by the author in various episodes, a remarkable feature is the astonishing brevity of his expression. Its translation without loss of original beauty, is no easy task. Prof Kulwant Singh, has, however, not only succeeded, but has come out with laurels. As a result of his efforts, we have a highly readable versified free English rendering of the epic.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to Prof Darshan Singh of Canada (formerly Professor of Agronomy, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana), who sponsored this project with a handsome donation.

I am also deeply grateful to S Gurdev Singh, President, Institute of Sikh Studies, Dr Kirpal Singh, Dr Gurbakhsh Singh and Dr Birendra Kaur for the valuable help rendered by them in this task. Dr Kirpal Singh has also contributed a scholarly note which highlights the importance of *Sri Gur Panth Parkash* as a primary source of Sikh history. An episode from this epic translated into English, along with original text and its transliteration in Roman script is being reproduced for our readers in this issue of the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*.



## OVERVIEW OF SIKHS IN UNITED KINGDOM

ONKAR SINGH\*

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There are over 400, 000 Sikhs and 150 gurdwaras (Sikh temples) spread across the United Kingdom, an island country, crammed with 60 million people. It's a democracy of many faiths and cultures. Genuinely a multiracial, multicultural and multifaith society, it's population growth is drawn from immigrants.

The first Sikh immigrants to Britain were the soldier-survivors of the First World War, though most of them came later from the Punjab, after India became independent. They were followed by thousands of Sikhs from East Africa.

They have done remarkably well in the last fifty years in many fields from farming and commerce to engineering, medicine and law, and distinguished themselves as businessmen, lawyers, judges, doctors and software experts.

An enterprising, resilient and industrious community, they have played a vital role in various professions, businesses and politics, not only in India, their country of origin, but also in other countries which they have made their home. Through hardwork, perseverance and honesty, they have made a life for themselves and their families.

In recognition of the brave Sikh community's contribution to the British society, Prime Minister Tony Blair paid them a glowing tribute on the occasion of the 2003 Vaisakhi celebrations in London. Mr Blair said, "I know that British Sikhs have made a great contribution to the economic, cultural and political life of the United Kingdom, and I firmly believe that your faith and culture have brought tremendous strength and benefits to our society."

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Over 150 gurdwaras dot the skyline of the United Kingdom. The city of London has over two dozen, while other big cities like Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol, Nottingham, Wolverhampton, Glasgow, Swindon, Warrington and Kent have several gurdwaras to meet the religious and social needs of the well established Sikh communities.

Southall (West London) is famous as an Asian commercial hub and residential district, with a predominant Indian population. The Sikhs are prominent in Southall, a place where they have a vibrant Punjabi way of life, and a spectacular spread of Indian supermarkets and popular eateries. Southall is home to six gurdwaras, three Hindu temples, a mosque and scores of churches serving immigrant communities. The gurdwaras are known by denominations such as, Ramgarhias, Namdharis, Sri Guru Singh Sabha and Shiromani Akali Dal. A gurdwara built on the basis of caste and communities is against the spirit and teachings of the Sikh Gurus, who worked to create a casteless society.

Southall now boasts of a magnificent 4-level newly-constructed "Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southall", the largest gurdwara outside India and Europe. It blends traditional and modern architecture using the latest technology with a serene spiritual ambience and grandeur, dominating the picturesque Southall.

Built at a phenomenal cost of 17 million pounds, the ambitious project covers a sprawling area of 6000 sq meters with a marble and granite finish and a gilded dome which attracts attention from afar. The main congregational prayer hall on the first level can accommodate 3000 worshippers and another 1000 on level-2 gallery. The vast langar (dining) hall on the ground floor provides free meals for a thousand pilgrims daily with a capacity of serving upto 20,000 on festivals.

Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales, paid a royal visit on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2003. He praised the Sikh community, for having served this country with great loyalty for hundreds of years, adding to the rich tapestry in Britain."

Another imposing Sikh shrine is the Gurdwara Singh Sabha in Hounslow. From a humble beginning, it has become a huge complex of a large marbled prayer hall, dining hall and classrooms, where hundreds of children are taught. The Queen accompanied by the

Duke of Edinburgh, paid a moving royal visit to the Gurdwara on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2004.

The Sikhs have generously contributed to the building of these magnificent gurdwaras to serve the rapidly growing Sikh community in London offering extensive modern facilities of a library, seminar room and a community center for educational, health and welfare services, and sports. An unmissable place of pilgrimage, these gurdwaras serve as a focal point of Sikh religion in Britain and Europe.

Wherever the Sikhs go to settle and live, they take with them the *gurbani* (Gurus Word), the divine hymns of their Gurus (spiritual prophets). They have a strong binding of unity and faith in the *gurbani*, a sense of responsibility to contribute to the general good of mankind.

The *gurbani* deprecates discrimination on grounds of religion and caste by birth. The core of *gurbani* is love and respect of all human being, despite their distinctive religions and beliefs, as they are all equal before the Creator. Meaningless rituals, ceremonials and rigid dogmas are disapproved.

The Sikhs abroad endeavour to have a gurdwara to install, with due honour and ceremony, their holy scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the very embodiment of *gurbani*, and the spiritual and religious guide of the Sikhs for all time. A large number of gurdwaras, spread the world over, speak of their abiding faith and overwhelming munificence.

The gurdwara is their place of worship. It is, practically, a meeting place for them. They come not only for religious ceremonies but also for social camaraderie. They may not see each other very often but do see them here, especially on Sundays and celebrated occasions such as, *gurpurabs* (birthdays and martyrdom days of their Gurus), and festivals like *Vaisakhi* and *Diwali*.

Every morning and evening, the gurdwaras resonate with the recitation from the Holy Granth and *shabad kirtan* (divine hymn singing). The live early morning (*amritvela*) religious ceremony direct from the Golden Temple, Amritsar, is also relayed. The devotees throng the gurdwaras at both times. Everyone is welcome. The visitor receives both blessings and hospitality. Free board and lodging is offered to wary travelers.

The love of one, omnipresent God, who is the Father of all creation and of all mankind, is the basic tenet of Sikhism. Guru

Nanak, the Founding Prophet of Sikh Faith, showed a rational, practical way to live in religious harmony and peace. His prophetic vision of the future of mankind based on universal love and brotherhood of man and respect for all faiths, offer the world hope of living in peace and harmony.

Never before had the British people known about the Sikhs. They are expected to know more about the dynamic, peace-loving Sikhs, and their faith, which, according to the historian, Prof. H.L. Bradshaw, is the "Faith of the New Age."

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*O sinner, who has instructed thee this wise?  
Even for a moment and an instant, thou contemplatest not the Lord,  
Who has blessed thee with thy soul and body.  
Thou art happy, eating, drinking and sleeping,  
But remembering thy Lord's Name, thou feelest miserable.  
When thou wert imprisoned in the womb of thy mother's belly,  
There thou wailed like a meek one.  
Bound with great pride and sins, thou shalt wander in many existences.  
What sorrows should I count,  
Which befall the mortal by forgetting his Lord?  
Peace, O Nanak is procured by realising the Lord's status.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 1225

ਰੇ ਪਾਪੀ ਤੈ ਕਵਨ ਕੀ ਮਤਿ ਲੀਨ ॥  
ਨਿਮਖ ਘਰੀ ਨ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਜੀਉ ਪਿੰਡੁ ਜਿਨਿ ਦੀਨ ॥  
ਖਾਤ ਪੀਵਤ ਸਵੈਤ ਸੁਖੀਆ ਨਾਮੁ ਸਿਮਰਤ ਖੀਨ ॥  
ਗਰਭ ਉਦਰ ਬਿਲਲਾਟ ਕਰਤਾ ਤਹਾ ਹੋਵਤ ਦੀਨ ॥  
ਮਹਾ ਮਾਦ ਬਿਕਾਰ ਬਾਧਾ ਅਨਿਕ ਜੋਨਿ ਭ੍ਰਮੀਨ ॥  
ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਬਿਸਰੇ ਕਵਨ ਦੁਖ ਗਨੀਅਹਿ ਸੁਖੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਹਰਿ ਪਦ ਚੀਨੁ ॥



## THE LEGACY OF HINDU CASTE HIERARCHY AND THE CONVERSION OF JAT PEASANTRY TO SIKHISM

BALDEV SINGH\*

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M S Ahluwalia has used my article, "*The Legacy of Rishis and Munis*" published on the SikhSpectrum.com, February 2006, to write his article, "*The Legacy Of Hindu Caste Hierarchy And The Conversion Of Jat Peasantry To Sikhism*", *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*, 2006, VIII (4), pp. 63-71. My article was earlier posted at [www.dalitindia.com](http://www.dalitindia.com) and also published in two parts in the *Sikh Virsa*, May and June 2006.

Since I started writing on Sikhism in 2002, my objective has been to project philosophy of Guru Nanak (*Gurmat*), Sikh history and the Sikh traditions in a logical and integrated manner that is consistent with the teachings of Aad Guru Granth Sahib. At the same time, I want to popularize the writings of "distinguished scholars" like Sardar Daljeet Singh and Sardar Jagjit Singh. To my knowledge these two are the only scholars, who have done an outstanding job in rebutting McLeod and his associates' fraudulent research on Sikhism under the cloak of academic scholarship. On Internet discussion with readers, I urged them to read Daljeet Singh's *Sikhism: A Comparative Study of its Theology and Mysticism* and Jagjit Singh's *The Sikh Revolution: A Perspective View*, in order to understand Sikhism in a logical and integrated manner.

In my article, "*The Legacy of Rishis and Munis*" I have quoted Jagjit Singh extensively in the section on caste system, but the bulk of the article is my own statements/views and my own interpretation of *gurbani*. I have also quoted other authors – Al-Beruni, G C Narang, Kahan Singh Nabha, Sangat Singh, J S Grewal and Gurbakhash Singh

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Kala Afghana to support my arguments/views. The theme of my article is to draw a clear distinction between "unique and revolutionary *Gurmat* philosophy of universal humanism" and "the life-negating and dehumanizing Varna Ashrama Dharama/Caste System."

On the other hand, it is not clear to me what Ahluwalia is trying to say in his disjointed article? It gives the impression that Jats were attracted to the Sikh faith due to their socio-economic conditions and the fame of Bhagat Dhanna Jat whose hymns are included in Aad Guru Granth Sahib. And the success of the Sikh movement was simply due to Jat peasant revolt against the very heavy burden of land taxes and oppression of the Mughals.

The Jats of Punjab were predominantly peasants and the most outstanding problem of the peasants in seventeenth century, when Sikh faith had taken its firm roots in the Punjab, was that there was a very heavy burden of land revenue coupled with the oppression of the Mughal ruling classes. This naturally provoked peasant revolts. Thus the economic pressure may have forced the Jat peasantry of Punjab, as elsewhere, to resort to armed violence.

It has been forcefully argued by the social scientists that it was not religious but economic factor, which forced the Jat peasantry of Punjab to resort to arms. However, in so far as the major factors leading to Jat revolts in Punjab during the period under review is concerned, the issue is inconclusive and debatable. Again to what extent their sacrifice, sincerity, hard work and patriotism has been rewarded, is yet to be properly assessed.

Ahluwalia has drawn this conclusion from Irfan Habib's article, "*Guru Nanak exalts Jats of Punjab*," Presidential address, Punjab History Conference, Patiala, 1971, and his book: *Agrarian System of Mughal India*, Bombay, 1963. Instead of questioning or challenging Habib's gross distortion of *Gurmat* and Sikh history, Sikh historians have been quoting him in their publications and this fact has not gone unnoticed by others. McLeod and his associates also quoted him in their work to support the theory of "Jat influx" into the Sikh movement.

The title of Habib's article, "*Guru Nanak exalts Jats of Punjab*" is erroneous and repugnant because Guru Nanak exalts all and not a single particular group of people of a particular place. His message is universal humanism—love, respect, justice and equality for all. He

declared his solidarity with the lowest of the lowest of society:

ਨੀਚਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤਿ ਨੀਚੀ ਹੁ ਅਤਿ ਨੀਚੁ ॥  
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਤਿਨ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਾਥਿ ਵਡਿਆ ਸਿਉ ਕਿਆ ਰੀਸ ॥  
ਜਿਥੈ ਨੀਚ ਸਮਾਲੀਅਨਿ ਤਿਥੈ ਨਦਰਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਖਸੀਸ ॥

*Nanak will stand by the lowest of lowest, not with the elite. Societies that take care of the downtrodden have the blessing of God.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 15

From Habib's article it is quite clear that he is ignorant of *Gurmat* philosophy and the history of Jats of Punjab. He ignores the simple fact that the numerical preponderance of Jats in the Sikh movement was natural, as Jats were the majority constituent of the population where Sikh faith took its roots and flourished — central Punjab. Though the Jats dominated the Sikh movement numerically, they [Jat Sikhs] were only a tiny fraction of the over all Jat population of India, which was either Muslim or Hindu. Majority of Jats of Punjab were Muslims and the others were either Hindus or Sultani-Hindus — Hindus who were moving away from their temples to the mosques and whose allegiance and devotion was shifting away from gods and goddesses to *pirs* and *fakirs* (Muslim holy men). The latter two categories supplied the recruits to the Sikh movement.

Besides, Habib's theory does not explain why the "heavy burden of land tax" imposed by the Mughals did not impel Hindu or Muslim Jats or other agricultural communities to take up arms against the Mughals? Further, was there no tax burden and oppression on other sections of the population like artisans and the mercantile classes? Moreover, who could be more exploited, persecuted and dehumanized than the Sudras and *Antyajas* (untouchables) of India who vastly outnumbered the upper castes? Did they not revolt against the tyranny of caste system? Nowhere in the history of mankind such a large majority has been exploited and subjugated to degrading and dehumanizing conditions for such a long period by a small minority as the Sudras and untouchables of India. Can Ahluwalia or Habib explain why the Sudras and untouchables did not revolt to free themselves from the tyranny of caste system? Was it not natural for them to revolt? Why was it natural only for peasants to revolt against heavy burden of taxes?

The Sikh struggle against the tyranny of caste system and the bigotry and oppression of Mughals continued from the time of Guru Nanak (1469-1539) to 1760s when the Khalsa rule was established over Punjab. It betrays ignorance of *Gurmat* philosophy and Sikh history or it is a disingenuous attempt – motive to distort or subvert Sikhism – on the part of anyone to characterize the Sikh struggle as a peasant-revolt!

In Ahluwalia's nine-page article, about four pages are from my article, which he has lifted word for word without reading or understanding the article. For example, he has inserted a passage from my article on page 67 of his article, which is not coherent with the paragraph above or below. Similarly, he has made errors in citations from my article. Further he wrongly attributes Guru Arjun's hymn (AGGS, M 5, p. 487) to Bhagat Dhanna and he does not give the page number in his citation (19. Sri Guru Granth Sahib.) It seems he did not read the hymn himself; he copied its English translation from some place else! Moreover, he did not study the sources that I have cited in my article. Had he studied Jagjit Singh's *The Sikh Revolution: A Perspective View*, he would have learned how absurd and irrational are Habib's arguments! Jagjit Singh has debunked McLeod's convoluted and absurd "Jat theory" point-by-point, pp. 260-281.

Finally, Ahluwalia and Habib would benefit from the keen observation of Mohammed Iqbal, a renowned poet and Islamic scholar, about the victory of Khalsa forces over Mughals:

*Khalsa shamsheero Quran ra burd,  
Andrin Kishwar Mussakmani namurd.*

The Khalsa took away the sword and *Quran* from the Muslims and shattered the dreams of Muslim conquest. In other words, it was their faith, the very *gurmat* philosophy that inspired the Khalsa to fight unflinchingly with dogged determination and eternal optimism.

## POLITICAL ASPECT OF SIKH DHARAM

RAGHBIR SINGH\*

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Politics without *Dharma* is a fertile field for corruption breeding and *Dharmik* life without political power cannot sustain. Both are essential complements of each other. So long as Sikhs were loyal to the Sikh tenets and lived as per teachings of the *gurbani*, they had glorious days. Victory and success in war and peace always greeted them everywhere. But as soon as they distanced themselves from *gurbani* i.e., *Guru shabad*, and started living life differently, their downfall started. It was because of this that they could not assert their rights at the time of Partition of India, carving of Punjabi state, division of river waters and control over their headworks, getting due status for the Punjabi language, attack on Darbar Sahib, '84 anti-Sikh riots and enquiry into these and compensation to riot-affected families. This is in spite of the fact that some of them were in ruling Congress and some others had their own government either alone or with active participation with BJP, both in the State and at the Center. It is a well-known fact that Sikh leaders, especially when in power, have never bothered about the future of their nation and have never anticipated its problems and formulated any plans well in advance to deal with them. Before partition, *Sikhi* was surviving only in West Punjab and that too mostly around Pothohar area where the Sikhs, as compared to those in the Eastern part of Punjab, were more literate, intelligent, in services and more prosperous. They were mostly in business. But they had no people who could afford to court arrests in case they were to agitate for more rights for the Sikhs. They were content as managers of gurdwaras and with reservation in government services for their literate members. Sikhs in the Eastern part, on the other hand, were mostly illiterate ruralites dependent on agriculture, simple, not very

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clever, and not very much conversant with Sikh ethos. Being without much work, they were always ready to face bullets and fill jails in large numbers at the call of their leaders. Before Partition, Sikhs on both sides generally felt content with the right to manage their gurdwaras through the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee that they got after many hurdles and sacrifices.

After Partition with the coming together of both segments in the Eastern part of Punjab, Sikh intelligentsia, scholars of Sikhism and large population became available to the Sikh leaders for agitations. But they could not properly channelise these forces intelligently enough. Mediocres became leaders. Two big challenges faced them. One basically related to the clash of business interests of both Hindu and Sikh business classes coming from across the border. This was exploited on religious basis by the language papers of Jalandher. The Hindu community rallied around their leaders in Congress and Jan Sangh to disown Punjabi language as their mother tongue and started opposing the formation of Punjabi State and teaching of Punjabi language in schools just to get ascendancy over the Sikhs in their business and industrial ventures. These issues, after a lapse of more than fifty years, are still pestering both the communities in one form and the other.

The second challenge relates to the lack of adequate intelligence and foresight in the traditional Sikh leaders who did not allow the educated youth to come forward. Earlier also, though Sikh leaders were not intelligent enough, but they were men of character and never faltered from the Sikh principles for their personal gains as they do these days. The present-day leadership came into power by merely exploiting the religious sentiments of mostly illiterate Sikh voters who were neither religiously nor politically conscious of their problems. The result is that such people grabbed important positions whereas they betrayed their ignorance of Sikh traditions, history and politics. To serve their own ends they continue to beguile the innocent people to fill jails in the name of religion. Without understanding the importance of various Sikh episodes and without any knowledge as to how to make their celebrations effective, they manage to hold the Sikh tercentenaries with pomp and show to advance their own interests.

Gurdwaras, SGPC and Shri Akal Takht are the three main institutions from where Sikhs draw their religious and political inspirations. *Kirtan* of *gurbani*, *shabad vichar* and discourses about Sikh

history in gurdwaras help the Sikhs to lead a clean and pious life and keep them in an upbeat mood for resisting any injustice to any part of the society. It goads them to establish an egoless society, free from any bias and exploitation of human rights and their labour. Shri Akal Takht is to ensure that politics does not transgress the limits of religious behaviour and if anybody does so, Takht is competent to admonish and punish him. This is not acceptable to the capitalist classes including some Sikh families also as they cannot flourish in such a society of Sikh thought. Political parties representing capital interests have always connived whenever the occasion came their way to take control of these institutions to dilute and ultimately efface the effect of Sikh ethos on Sikh psyche. So far, much against the ethos of Sikhism, the Sikh leaders for their own ulterior motives and to widen the influence of other capitalist forces, have made them subservient to politics so as to exploit the innocent Sikhs in the name of Sikh Panth. Instead of building character of the Sikh youth, they are busy in corrupting them and in creating a class of neo-Sikhs with the help of *deras*, etc., votes of whose disciples ensure their success in elections to continue exploitation of the poor. While Guru Tegh Bahadur sacrificed his life for independence of all religions, the present-day Sikh leaders, for their personal interests, kept quiet when the BJP government in Gujrat was massacring thousands of Muslims.

All the poor, including Sikhs, who believe in *gurbani* should understand that all the political parties including those of Sikhs are not their well-wishers. They have proved so by their past actions. Deras under the tutelage of Sikh leaders misinterpret, for their ulterior motives, the religion and social values as preached by the Sikh Gurus and they use it as opium for the masses. Similarly, the Marxists who condemn religion as opium have made Marxism also an opium for their poor followers by dogmatic approach to this cult with the result that after remaining in power in Russia for about seven decades their cult has gone into hibernation in barren land of atheism with poor hope of germination unless it is fertilized with Dharma nutrient and genuine interest for the poor. Sikh religion which is a whole life religion condemns exploitation of any kind. It stands for the poor and downtrodden people irrespective of any caste and creed.<sup>2</sup> The poor of all hues should wake up and, discarding their leaders who have done nothing for them, should rally round the *gurbani* teachings, ignoring

this or that leader, to improve their lot in a socialist way. Sikhism cannot survive without the power of downtrodden people.<sup>3</sup> The aim of Sikhism is to replace the present capitalist ruling classes with the genuine representatives of the Sikh masses without any distinction of caste and creed.<sup>4</sup>

Many well meaning persons of socialist leanings left Sikh fold for the reason that Sikh leaders, being of narrow vision, could not convincingly put forth Gurbani's message of *Kirt karo, Vand chhako and Nam Japo*. They also failed to impress the role of religion for creating contentment in the persons yearning for material gains. People like late Com Hardit Singh Bhattal of CPM and Bhai Jaita who felt impressed with Guru Nanak's thought, irrespective of their affiliation with Congress, Communist or BSP parties, should come forward to preach the human, social and dignity aspect of labour in Sikhism, Dalit leaders too have grabbed all the privileges to enjoy for generations together like capitalists. They have built palatial bungalows in cities enabling their children to get good education and become engineers, doctors, and administrative civil and police officers. They become legislators and ministers too. But their poor sections are still poor as before like the other poor of the society. They should demand that privileges should cease to the beneficiary after his two generations and thus make room for others. Both Sikhism and Marxism are for the poor. If the believers in these two cults are sincere they should forget minor differences of approach and work together with the sincere Dalits to ameliorate the lot of the poor sections.

Going to gurdwaras and reciting *gurbani* without living by it and without helping those in need do not make one a good Sikh. There is lot of difference in believing a religion and living by it. The poor and not the capitalists are the pillars of Sikhism.

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## ISC LAUNCHES SIKH EDUCATION FUND - A REPORT -

KARTAR SINGH\*

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### SIKH EDUCATION FUND

In a historic meeting of Interim Executive Committee held on 4th Dec, 2006, Dr Sardara Singh Johl, Chairman, Advisory Council for education put forth a Resolution for the official launch of a 'Sikh Education Fund'. This was actually a follow-up of a very well attended Seminar on 'Rural Education in Punjab' organized by the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh. A panel of eminent scholars had then produced a hard hitting memorandum addressed to the Government of Punjab and various other concerned agencies identifying the alarming situation, and suggested remedies.

The ISC organizers had invited about 40 eminent members to attend the above meeting held on 4th Dec, 2006, at its HQ. The press was kind enough to be present in full strength and TV coverage too was adequate. The Resolution put forth by Dr S S Johl was debated by our members and, once convinced about its urgent necessity, was passed unanimously.

### RESOLUTION - 1

"After deliberating and discussing the problem of virtual collapse of the education system, especially at the school level, in the state of Punjab, at a two-day seminar on October 1 & 2, 2006, at the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh and the overall recommendations of the eminent scholars and educationists who participated in the seminar, the Interim Executive Committee of

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the International Sikh Confederation (ISC) has unanimously resolved to establish a Sikh Education Fund (SEF) on the lines of Jewish Education Fund (JEF) to the tune of one billion US dollars to empower the Sikh youth with the latest and the best tools of quality education in the form of scholarships, freeships and other incentives after making a thorough screening and objective assessment of the needy, deserving and meritorious students at the various levels of school and higher education. The committee appeals to the Sikh religious organizations, affluent Sikh corporate houses, family trusts and individuals to contribute liberally to this fund and help the ISC to launch this most urgently needed project for empowering the Sikh youth in order to enable them to cope up with the highest challenges of the fast-changing modern globalised world, to be stake holders in the major areas of global economy, civil society and international affairs. **The contributions, in the form of cheques, drafts and other available financial instruments may be sent to ISC Sikh Education Fund (SEF), at Plot No 1, Kendri Singh Sabha, Sector 28-A, Madhya Marg, Chandigarh."**

Response was spontaneous and within a short time a nucleus corpus of about ten *laks* was created there and then through instant voluntary contributions by the members present in the meeting. The gathering unanimously nominated His Honour Justice Mota Singh, QC, to be the Chairman of the Trust responsible for managing. He was tasked with the responsibility of choosing a panel of five more members and proceed in establishing the Trust. Lt Gen Kartar Singh suggested that the Trust should consist of eleven members whose composition be approved in the next General Body Meeting of ISC. Till then, the ISC was to receive the donations and transfer the amount received to the Trust on it's registration and opening of a separate account. This was unanimously approved.

### ISC TV CHANNEL

5. On behalf of the Advisory Council for Media, Publicity and IT, Dr Kharak Singh then proposed that the ISC launch it's own TV Channel at the earliest. This project has already been thoroughly discussed in various meetings of the Interim Executive Committee

and is considered totally feasible. The total outlay was estimated at Rupees two *crores* and well within our reach. The benefits to the Sikh Panth would be tremendous in that the ISC and all major Sikh Institutions / Organizations will have an effective media facility to communicate directly with global Sikhs. Sikh youth and Sikh masses will be educated and motivated with the teachings of our Gurus through effective use of audio-visual media. The sacrifices made by our ancestors can be depicted in such a manner as to leave indelible imprint on the impressionable minds of our youth who are thirsting to be educated and familiarised with their rich and proud Sikh heritage.

### RESOLUTION - 2

“The Interim Executive Committee and eminent members present at its meeting held on 4th Dec, 2006, hereby resolves that the ISC work towards establishment of an independent TV Channel in the very near future. This will enable the ISC to communicate directly the Sikh ethos, Sikh way of life and literature, history and the sacred contents of Guru Granth Sahib globally. This will also enable us to inculcate in Sikh youth the importance of maintaining our distinct identity and acquaint them with the history of the sacrifices made by our Gurus and predecessors to uphold the tenets of Sikh faith. The ISC may seek the help of sponsors to finance this project provided ownership rights of this channel remain with the ISC.”

It was generally felt by the members that the Sikh Panth has a number of eminent Sikhs who would volunteer to set up this TV Channel. The ISC could identify such potential sponsors and obtain their support in quickly mustering financial support and expertise.

The Resolution was passed unanimously.

The fourth of December will go down in the history of the Sikh Panth as an auspicious day. Two momentous decisions were taken by the ISC, which if successfully implemented, would enable it to take a big leap forward in the spread of Sikhism and the teachings of the Gurus worldwide. One could easily attribute this to the increasing strength and enthusiasm of the ISC organizers, encouraged by the presence of a noble and devout Sikh personality – H H Justice Mota Singh, QC. All credit to him for flying in from London to attend this

meeting.

### **ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR DIASPORA AND LEGAL AFFAIRS**

On 5<sup>th</sup> Dec, 2006, H H Justice Mota Singh, QC, chaired a meeting of his Advisory Council attended by its members at ISC Headquarters. After a very productive session it was decided that we prepare ourselves to tackle the following issues:-

- (a) Defence of Sikh Legal Rights
- (b) Defence of Sikh Identity
- (c) Recognition of Anand Karaj Ceremony under the Indian Marriage Act.
- (d) Sikh Representation on world Bodies
- (e) Sikh Personal Law
- (f) All India Gurudwaras Act

It would be appropriate to briefly outline the substance of each of these issues.

#### ***DEFENCE OF SIKH LEGAL RIGHTS***

The ISC will identify and empanel Sikh lawyers in India and in various countries abroad where we have a substantive population. The ISC will take active part in legally defending such rights wherever this AC considers it appropriate. The ISC is ready to defray expenses wherever voluntary effort is lacking and employ capable lawyers to defend our rights.

#### ***DEFENCE OF SIKH IDENTITY***

The ISC must make concerted efforts to encourage Sikh youth to preserve their identity. We should defend the normative position of Sikhs rather than the actual position. In fact, an apostate Sikh is an aberration rather than a norm.

#### ***ANAND KARAJ CEREMONY***

Members felt that the Anand Karaj Ceremony must be officially recognized by the Government for visas and all other purposes. At present, we have to obtain a certificate under the Hindu Marriage Act, despite the fact that Anand Marriage has been recognised in the Indian Constitution.

#### ***SIKH REPRESENTATION IN WORLD BODIES***

It was strongly advocated by all members that Sikhs must be officially represented in major world bodies such as the United Nations.

Some members quoted precedents wherein an Organization of Unrepresented Nations was formed as an unofficially recognized body. Others quoted the cases of countries such as Estonia and Latvia which were part of Russia at one time but are now recognized as independent members. This really does not support our case. It was decided that the ISC will give further consideration to this.

### **SIKH PERSONAL LAW**

All members supported the enactment of a Sikh Personal Law by our Government. The IOSS has already moved in this direction and we will pursue this with some vigour.

### **ALL INDIA GURUDWARAS ACT**

Members were informed that an amended act as suggested by Justice Harbans Singh and his Committee rests with the SGPC. We need to pursue this case with the SGPC as we feel that an amended act will be an asset to the Sikhs.

H H Justice Mota Singh, QC, closed the meeting with the promise that his Advisory Council will vigorously pursue these projects to a successful conclusion.

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*Man burns in the fire of lust and wrath  
And knows not what belongs to him and what to another.  
The world is involved in ocean of sorrow.  
O my Lord, mercifully save Thou Thy slave.  
Nanak, seeks the refuge of Thine lotus feet, O Lord,  
And is ever, ever a sacrifice unto Thee.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, 1225

ਆਪ ਪਰ ਕਾ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਜਾਨੈ ਕਾਮ ਕ੍ਰੋਧਹਿ ਜਾਰਿ ॥  
ਸੰਸਾਰ ਸਾਗਰੁ ਦੁਖਿ ਬਿਆਪਿਓ ਦਾਸ ਲੇਵਹੁ ਤਾਰਿ ॥  
ਚਰਨ ਕਮਲ ਸਰਣਾਇ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਦ ਸਦਾ ਬਲਿਹਾਰਿ ॥

**THREE DECADES OF SERVICE**  
**BY GURU GOBIND SINGH STUDY CIRCLE**  
**- A REPORT -**

GURBAKSH SINGH USA\*

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Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle was founded in 1972 by the enthusiastic and committed students of the government college, Ludhiana to study their great heritage and direct their lives accordingly to benefit from it. Soon, more youth from other colleges from the north India states joined it. The movement has now grown to become a great Sikh institution enjoying great respect all over the world. Not only overseas Sikh youth but adults and Sikh institutions are also interested in the services rendered to society by this organisation. It spreads the universal message of *gurbani* for welfare of society through unity of humanity and world peace.

The Study Circle aims to build the high ideal character of youth, specially the students and thereby check the spread of growing vices and anti-social attitudes among them. The Study Circle has been successful in creating among students a culture for learning *gurbani*, reciting *keertan*, and sharing the *gurmat* philosophy with others.

The Study Circle has four regional units covering 18 states divided into 54 zones for planning and conducting their activities effectively to meet the needs of the local people:

1. North Region : Punjab, Haryana, Jammu-Kashmir.
2. Central Region : Uttar Pardesh, Delhi, Madhya Pardesh, Chhatisgarh, Rajasthan.
3. Eastern Region : West Bangal, Orissa, Jharkhand.
4. Southern Region : Maharashtra, Gujrat, Karnatka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala.

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In addition, they have their units in 11 overseas countries to share the *gurmat* message with the world student bodies for mutual understanding and maintaining of peace in the world.

To achieve their great ambitious mission, they have assigned the responsibility of each division to a competent director. Following directorates have been established for this purpose.

### YOUTH SERVICES

Yearly youth festivals are conducted in schools and colleges in which youth participate and compete with each other. Their performance for reciting *keertan*, giving lectures on selected Sikh historical events and *gurmat* philosophy are judged. Singing poems reflecting the Khalsa mission and their achievements are evaluated. The participating youth are honored based on their individual performance and team scores. Written tests are held to motivate them to study and grasp the Sikh heritage. Prizes are given at zonal and national level. Regular seminars motivate youth to build good personalities and develop their leadership traits so that they guide more youth to practice virtues, be role models and achievers in their lives.

### EDUCATIONAL TRAINING

One-day training sessions for the students are conducted in schools to teach them basic principles of human behaviour and Sikh values to be followed in their schools and homes. Open discussions create a desire to learn more and enjoy being a respectable citizen.

Celebration of the annual Mai Bhago Day inculcates in them a spirit of self-confidence and sacrifice to face odds bravely to maintain peace. Weekly Study Circles are held in schools and colleges to teach the relevance of *gurbani* to guide them for the modern day living. Units established in educational institutions celebrate *gurpurbs* to spread the information regarding Sikh heritage.

To make the students feel at home, a welcome function, instead of the practice of hated ragging, is held for the first year students. Needed guidance and information is given to the new comers and they are treated affectionately as younger brothers and sisters. The senior students become their buddies and assist them to provide a learning environment and develop their individual faculties in studies and co-curricular activities. For providing training in community living,

the youth are taken out on tours to religious and historical places where they learn about their heritage firsthand and develop a pride of a practicing Sikh. For financial support to the needy students, Sahibzada Ajit Singh Trust has been established by the Circle organizers.

### **CULTURAL & ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES**

International Educational Conference is held annually in which students from overseas countries take great interest to know their roots, develop feelings of unity among themselves and plan to work together to achieve the Khalsa mission of *sarbat ka bhala*.

Two Gian Arjun schools, one each in district of Gurdaspur and Patiala, are being run to develop a model for teaching values of Sikh way of life. Gian Arjun summer schools are conducted to teach Sikh heritage and *gurbani* recitation, particularly in schools outside Punjab. Out of 40 schools in Ludhiana for working children aged from 6 to 14 years, two schools are being run by Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle volunteers. Turban tying teaching center in Ludhiana is a great attraction for youth to learn art of tying good looking turbans. Competitions are held and prizes given to the best turbaned youth. To encourage creative writers, scholars, this wing honours them and publishes their writings. Seminars for the Sikh academicians are held for sharing and discussing various aspects of the Sikhs heritage. Young writers are encouraged to take part in the seminars and learn from the senior scholars.

### **SOCIAL & HEALTH SERVICES**

Bhai Ghanaya Sewa International holds free medical camps and arranges functions for eye donations and blood donations are also arranged for the patients. Gurpurbs are celebrated as good health days to provide medicine, blood group checking, cancer checking, etc. Patient Fund has been established to help the poor patients admitted into the hospitals. Birthday of Guru Harkrishan is celebrated as *Sewa* day to distribute medicines and fruit to the patients.

Lectures, camps, seminars are held to caution the youth against the ill effects of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, etc. Drug de-addiction education is provided in local gatherings, and anti-drug posters are distributed in rural areas.

Three regular de-addiction centers are being run in Ludhiana, Hospiarpur and Killa Raipur. Allopathic, homeopathic and



psychopathic treatment are provided. There is great desire among the drug-addicts to get free from this self-invited scourge which have ruined the lives of many a youth.

A separate Istri Wing has been established to help women students to get involved in the Panthic affairs and contribute their share to spread the message of *gurmata* teachings among the disadvantaged sections of humanity.

### PUBLICATION & INFORMATION

This directorate produces low cost literature in simple language to provide information on Sikh history, message of *gurbani* and Sikh Code of Conduct, to meet the needs of youth. More than 100 books and 300 tracts have been published.

To share the information regarding the activities, undertaken by different zones and wings of the Circle, a *Study Circle Samachar* is published every month. It motivates different units to get hints and guidance from other volunteers to do their best to serve society by holding local functions. Information Technology wing has created computer facilities, internet access and website of the Circle at Central and Zonal offices so that they get connected with the whole world to share their activities.

Slide projectors and LSD projectors are used to educate youth & the Sikh community regarding their unique heritage to give them the pride of their faith. *Sada Virsa Sada Gaurav*, the Punjabi monthly journal is playing a very useful role in encouraging hundreds of youth to become good writers and thousands of readers to develop love for the Sikh heritage.

Similarly, their other directorates are actively busy in teaching *gurbani* study and *keertan* recitation. Thousands of students were motivated to read Sri Guru Granth Sahib, hundreds won very attractive and valuable awards for their efforts. It is not possible to describe all the contributions of the Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle made during the three decades in this brief article. During this period, the author has been associated with them. One can only imagine and understand the utility of services performed by them by participating in their functions at local, zonal and national level. Their activities need a full volume to be described for information of the readers.

## SIKHISM : A PROGRESSIVE RELIGION – PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE FOR HUMANITY –

M P S KANDAL\*

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Sikhism is the most modern, progressive, tolerant, accommodating and all-embracing religion. Irrespective of religion, caste, creed or colour, all are welcome at any time into a gurdwara for God's blessings, *parshad*, food and overnight stay. This is the only religion whose holy book Guru Granth Sahib, has, besides 6 Guru *Sahiban*, *Bani* of one Gursikh and 28 *Bhagats*/Bhatts" belonging to different religions/castes/creeds/sects. Every verse in "Guru Granth Sahib" is loaded with deep philosophy of life for all humanity. Tenets of a Gursikh - *Kirat Karni*, *Wand Chhakna* and *Naam Japna*, as also, serving the *sangat* – and protecting the weaker against tyranny, even at the cost of one's life, are most appealing to any good human being. But the way in which most of the present-day leaders with vested interests project and practice, handle and exploit the religion and its institutions, is rather disappointing. Their conduct, instead of making non-Sikhs like and admire Sikhism, is even taking away their own people, especially the younger lot from its fold! This, obviously, should be a matter of grave concern to all of us.

The subject, therefore, calls for an urgent attention of educated, devoted and well meaning Sikhs the world over. A few suggestions covered in the succeeding paragraphs are put forward for consideration and necessary action.

### GRANTHIS, RAGIS AND SEWADARS

#### *Education and Training*

It is felt that generally the *granthis* and *ragis*, who form the frontline

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cadres for the propagation of this most admirable religion, are not adequately educated and trained for this onerous task. As a result, most people consider listening to them a waste of time. All professional *granthis* and *ragis* should be at least graduates or equivalent, given a thorough knowledge of Sikhism and also exposed to the writings and philosophies of other well-known religions, so that they are able to communicate with all members of society in a manner that inspires confidence and respect for themselves and Sikhism. *Katba Vachak* Sant Singh Maskeen was one such model whom everyone yearned to listen. His contribution would be remembered and admired for a long time.

The *ragis* should be given proper and thorough training in *ragas*, and made to sing each *sabad* in appropriate *raga* as per the time and occasion. There is so much to choose from. Singing *sabad* on the cinematic tunes invariably takes one away from meditation, besides violating the basic theme of the *sabad*.

Training of the *sewadars* is normally ignored. Proper thought must be given and each person must be trained for the job one is supposed to execute. They must be explained in detail the need for personal hygiene, general cleanliness, and humble and winsome conduct. Above all, each one of them must be made to feel and realize their own importance in the functioning of the gurdwara or the religious institution where one is working. This will motivate all *sewadars* to put in their best in the execution of their assigned duties.

### ***Status & Emoluments***

It is suggested that all the persons who are on the payroll of the gurdwaras and other religious institutions, must be given proper status and emoluments including perquisites like residence, transport, phone, etc., depending upon their education, professional knowledge and inherent capabilities. There should be a laid down code of conduct for them. That will ensure proper respect for them by one and all as in the case of a Bishop, Priest or a Deacon in Christianity.

Given the high percentage of unemployment in the country there is a tendency to exploit these poor people with meagre amounts or compensation. The exploitation of the persons employed in the gurdwaras and other institutions must be totally banned. Otherwise these poorly paid persons would indulge in undesirable activities of deplorable nature. It must be understood that they are not *sewadars* in

the true sense of the word, they are there to earn livelihood for themselves and their families. Therefore, the most important motivation for them is – status and emoluments.

## **SIKH GURDWARAS**

### ***Beautification and Maintenance***

Gurdwara is a place of worship. Its building and the premises must be beautified and maintained so well that anyone visiting would remember it as a feast for their eyes, mind and soul. In some of the gurdwaras where the building is a grandiose one, the premises unfortunately are rather dirty, and toilets filthy. Probably the idea of beautifying the area with proper landscaping and planned gardening has never occurred to some of us. It would be a good idea if every gurdwara management committee aims at beautifying the premises as one of the important objectives and resolves to maintain it as such. Towards this, *sewa* could be asked for from renowned Sikh architects and landscape experts.

### ***Sanctity and discipline***

It is unfortunate that requisite sanctity is not maintained in the gurdwaras. Ladies are found talking about vegetable prices, saris, ornaments, servants, daughters-in-laws and what not, and the children are running around as if they were on a picnic. Visit to the gurdwaras should not be treated as a mere ritual to get *parshad* and socialize, but must go much beyond. This must be emphasized and ensured by the *granthis*, *ragis*, *sewadars* and the elders in the *sangat* not by bullying but repeatedly requesting and tactfully appealing to the masses to behave in a highly disciplined manner and help in maintaining an appropriate atmosphere. Even though there is currently a lot of awareness and improvement in this direction, there is still a need to perform better.

The gurdwara management must exhibit appropriate sensitivity towards those residing in close proximity to the gurdwara. Where is the need for having loudspeakers blasting the neighborhood. These should be used for the benefit of the *sangat* inside the gurdwara only. There have been instances where people have protested against this practice, especially during the children's examination period.

The code of conduct for the paid personnel in the gurdwara and other institutions should be strictly observed. There must be proper

and regular checks by the management committee members to ensure cleanliness, security, discipline and sanctity.

## LANGARS

In spite of all the funds available, some of the *langars* are still run in primitive style. There is little emphasis on hygiene and sanitation. There could be modern kitchen and dining halls with proper fly proofing and seating arrangements for the *sangat* with soft soothing music in the form of *sabads*. The main purpose of *langars* is to practise equality, and humility, love for each other, irrespective of the religion, caste or creed or social and economic status.

There must be a proper place for washing hands and feet, with rugs and towels at the entrance to the *langar* hall. For, otherwise on a rainy day, a lot of mud and dirt are brought in through the dirty feet and deposited on the rugs meant for seating. Further, is it proper to sit on such dirty mats to partake *langar* with *sewadars* serving with dirty feet in close proximity to the plates in which the holy *parshad*, cooked in the name of the Lord, is served? Sometimes, this is spilled on the floor by those serving due to lack of proper serving spoons and training. Isn't all this disrespect to the holy *parshad* itself?

Why cannot there be a seating arrangement in the form of long continuously low benches with long narrow tables in front with Sunmica tops to ensure proper cleanliness. This would also provide for seating in *Pangats*. The washing place for the used utensils is normally not well provided for. It should be suitably designed where each individual is able to clean his utensils with devotion and pride.

In most places beggars turn up for partaking in the *langar*. Some of them are very stinking. They must be most welcome but not in that state. And this can be done as a social service to the society by educating and suitably appealing to them without bullying or sounding rude. They must be told *Langar is Waheguru ji's parshad* which must be taken after cleaning the body and clothes. It will be an indirect way of making them take a bath and wash their clothes, which some of them do not do for days at a stretch resulting in their falling sick.

## ACCOMMODATION

Suitable boarding and lodging for short stays at most places could be provided and maintained at nominal but varying rates for the

pilgrims. Those who cannot afford to pay can be accommodated totally free. Presently, accommodation provided at some of the places is poorly managed, even misused. Common toilets are stinking due to various reasons.

### MANAGEMENT OF FUNDS

Collection and generation of funds in Sikhism is not a difficult proposition due to the concept of *daswandh*, i.e., sharing of 10 percent of one's earnings for *Dbaram Arth*. As is seen in most gurdwaras, funds are poured in large amounts by the *sangat*. There is, therefore, a need to have a committee of educated, well-meaning, genuine and experienced persons to carry out the proper planning for the utilization of funds. Funds must also be used for further generation of more funds to help the needy and for social uplift (by providing hospitals, health centers, dispensaries, educational institutions, etc.), and to promote religious and spiritual awareness through holding *kathas*, *kavi darbars*, *rensabai*, *kirtans*, playlets, TV serials and radio programmes etc). However, collecting donations in such functions and gurdwaras should be in a dignified and subtle manner. There are *golaks*/safes where people pour their donations according to their wish. There is no need for announcing names of those who have donated varying amounts during the *ardas*. At times, the reading of the list of names with amounts, takes much more time than the proper *ardas* itself. Sad? Yes, very sad but it is a fact! Are they trying to inform the Lord as to what amount is donated by whom? Does he not know without announcing it? Or is it to tell the *sangat* that if you want your name to be announced, you may also give some donations?

Having *Akhand Paths* costing different amounts depending upon the market value of the various gurdwaras is a shame. Further, honouring devotees by giving away different types of "*Saropas*" according to the amount they have donated or status is against the basic principle of equality in Sikhism. One should practise and propagate anonymity to whatever extent one can.

### USE OF TV AND OTHER MEDIA

The fact that Guru Granth Sahib preaches love for all, and that every verse therein, highlights the Philosophy of life for all humanity, is not known to most people. Even a large number of the Sikhs are

not aware as to how many great holy souls are being paid homage to by them when they do *Matha Tekna* to Guru Granth Sahib. No doubt, whosoever becomes aware of this, would not be able to resist liking and admiring Sikhism. Unfortunately, very little is being done in this regard.

TV and other media must be used in a big way to make this known to the general public and to bring out the tenets of a Gursikh including the meaning / spirit behind the five Ks. This could be achieved through interesting and absorbing TV serials, light and sound shows and playlets on Bhai Kanhaya ji, Banda Bahadur, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Hari Singh Nalwa, Akali Phoola Singh, Nawab Kapur Singh, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and many other Sikh personalities. These would be of tremendous value in educating the masses about the most important aspects of a Gursikh's life.

### REVIEW OF OUTDATED PRACTICES

There is a need to review the old practices. Past must be remembered for it brings out invaluable lessons and is a strong motivational aid. But to keep sticking to the past and denying some of the modern scientific advances in the world and changing environments would not be wisdom. Yes, one should not lose one's identity and the salient codes. But the ways and the means of practising the codes should be reviewed.

One should use the gurdwara for prayers, devotional discourses for the propagation of tenets of a true Sikh and practicing principles of Sikhism and not for gaining political mileage. There was a lot of hue and cry in the gurdwaras against Sikh women wearing helmets, which is only meant to protect accidental deaths. But there has been no attention given towards stopping the Sikh women and men from smoking, drug addiction, alcoholism and having too many children raised in poverty, and remaining dirty in mind, body and soul, and so on.

Is it not being narrow minded when one terms helmet as *Topee* ? Is it not a protective gear for a particular purpose and duration of time? A fighter aircraft pilot has to wear a helmet. Doesn't one use raincoat with cap for protecting one's turban and hair. Young Sikh men in the Armed Forces, during training period and later, use *patkas*, swimming caps and masks for sports, swimming and fencing, respectively. Should they be instructed not to do so because it is

against the religion? There is another thought that merits consideration. All Sikh children should be initiated with *amrit* by the age of 4-6 years. All the other major religions do this, examples being "Baptism in Christianity", "Mundan in Hinduism", "Circumcision in Islam". Why not in Sikhism? This will make the parents conscious of the fact and would, to a large extent, make them imbibe the right *sanskars* – truthfulness, goodness, compassion, brotherhood and humility, into their children. The children would, from the start, know that they belong to the Guru's Sikhism and also what it means. As regards "*Jap*" it could be in the form of *Satnam Sri Waheguru* to start with and after a while *Mool Mantra* and later all the *Banis*. After a few years, most of them, hopefully, would choose to be Guru's Singhs and go through *Amrit Chhakna* in the conventional way.

The Sikhs being followers of the most progressive religion, should ponder seriously to bring about salient meaningful changes which would not interfere with the tenets of a true Sikh and the original principles of Sikhism. It would be a good idea to appoint an appropriate committee to review such practices within a specified time frame and have these ratified, by the Panth at Sri Akal Takht, Amritsar in the presence of "Guru Granth Sahib".

## CONCLUSION

The points mentioned above are not the only ones that need consideration as explained. There are many more beyond the scope of this article. This is just the tip of the iceberg. Please note that the observations and suggestions outlined in this article are not intended to hurt anyone's feeling but is self-criticism. Every Sikh is a party to the wrong practices. Some are indulging in this without realizing as to what is wrong (due to ignorance); some are aware of the shortcomings, but do not wish to contribute either due to lack of will or fear of being misunderstood; and then there are a large number who feel they are too good to notice or be bothered.

It is hoped that this note of self criticism would encourage the well-meaning Sikhs to do their best towards effecting all-round improvements and making the world aware as to what a wonderful religion, a philosophy of life for all humanity, they belong to.



## VIGNETTES OF SIKH VALOUR AND SACRIFICE

JOGINDER SINGH\*

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A few brief sketches of battles where Sikhs had shown unmatched courage, are given here to show how they distinguished themselves from others.

### DEFENCE OF SARA GARHI 1897

Ten thousand Afridis attacked the post at Sara Garhi on 12-09-1897. This attack was repulsed by Sikh regiment of 21 men led by Hawaldar Ishar Singh. In the first hour, more than 200 Pathans were killed. The battle continued for the whole day and brave Sikh unit of Signals faced them. Though miniscule in number as compared to Pathans, they could not break the will of Sikh's fighting spirit. Finding it difficult to dislodge them, they set on fire the dry grass surrounding the *garhi*. Instead of facing them, they took shelter behind the smoke. At last, only two Sikhs survived who took daggers in their hands and gave the enemy the taste of their chivalry. Both laid down their lives, but not before they could send message to the regiment. On hearing this account, the British parliament paid a standing tribute to their memory. Each of them was decorated and awarded by them the highest bravery award "Indian order of Merit". Each of their family was given one square of land (25 acres land) and Rs 500.

### FIRST WORLD WAR

On 26-10-1914 (first world war), Sikh forces reached Mercedez in France. This was the first army of India, which reached that country. German continuous firing could not deter them from advancing. They fought while standing in trenches full of 2-3 feet-mud. In extreme cold weather till dawn, they sang Guru Gobind Singh's *Sabad*.

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\* J-12/76, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi - 27

ਰੋਗਨ ਤੇ, ਅਰ ਸੋਗਨ ਤੇ, ਜਲ ਜੋਗਨ ਤੇ ਬਹੁ ਭਾਂਤਿ ਬਚਾਵੈ ॥

ਸਤਰੂ ਅਨੇਕ ਚਲਾਵਤ ਘਾਵ, ਤਉ ਤਨ ਏਕ ਨਾ ਲਾਗਨ ਪਾਵੈ ॥

The enemy was astonished how they had survived in cold trenches and yet did not surrender an inch of land to the enemy. While passing through 800 yards space in continuous firing on 28-10-1914, they occupied the village. But only 58 Sikh soldiers could survive out of 280 men. House of Commons paid a special tribute by standing. Some of them were decorated by "Victoria Cross", the highest bravery award.

### **JALLIANWALA BAGH**

Just after the first world war, the British army's brigadier Dyer massacred peaceful Indians who had gathered for Baisakhi on 13-04-1919 at Jallianwala Bagh. What a strange reward to those who staked their lives to save the lives of English men?

### **KOMA GATA MARU**

Earlier Baba Gurdit Singh's ship "Koma Gata Maru" with 376 men on board was not allowed to land on Canada's soil. More than 300 of the passengers were Sikhs. The ship was hired from a Japanese company and named S. S. Guru Nanak. At last the ship was returned to the port of embarkation at Budge-Budge Calcutta, when they were greeted by British Government with bullets killing 18 persons. The government thought they were going to Canada to spread dis-affection against them, which was an absolutely false allegation.

### **RAKAB GANJ**

In 1920, outer wall of Rakab Ganj Gurdwara in New Delhi was demolished to make way for road leading to church. Sardul Singh Cavasher with a *jatha* of 100 Sikhs protested. There were also wide protests by Sikhs in Punjab. The government realized the futility of its scheme and rebuilt the wall.

### **SAKA NANKANA SAHIB**

About 200 Sikhs, unarmed and peaceful, went to Nankana Sahib (Pakistan) under the leadership of Lakshman Singh Dharowal to turn out Mahant Narain Das, a corrupt and morally depraved *pujari*. Sikhs were mercilessly killed. This episode awakened the whole nation. It proved to be the final nail in the coffin of Mahants. About a month

earlier, Gurdwara Tarn Taran Sahib was liberated after scuffle which resulted in martyrdom of two Sikhs.

### KEYS MORCHA

Darbar Sahib's keys *morcha* was started as Deputy Commissioner, Amritsar took away the keys of Darbar Sahib thinking that huge money offered by devotees was going to be used for national cause against them. Baba Kharak Singh led this *morcha* which culminated in success.

### GURU KA BAGH MORCHA

Guru ka Bagh is situated near Ajanala, Amritsar District about 15 miles from Amritsar. The Mahant of Gurdwara who thought that he was the owner of the land and did not allow local people to cut wood, was supported by the government. I give below a letter by C. F. Andrews, a Christian Leader of Bombay who used to read newspapers about non-violence *morcha* started by the Sikhs. He came to Amritsar to see for himself, and what he saw is narrated in his own words:

"When I reached the Gurdwara itself, I was struck at once by the absence of excitement such as I had expected to find among so great a crowd of people. Close to the entrance there was a reader of the Scriptures who was holding a very large congregation of worshippers silently as they were seated on the ground before him. In another quarter there were attendants who were preparing the simple evening meals for the Gurdwara guests by grinding the flour between two large stones. There was no sign that the actual beating had just begun and that the sufferers had already endured the shower of blows. But when I asked one of the passers-by, he told me that the beating was now taking place. On hearing this news, I at once went forward. There were some hundreds present seated on an open piece of ground watching what was going on in front. Their faces were filled with agony. I watched their faces first of all, before I turned the corner of a building and reached a spot where I could see the beating itself. There was not a cry raised from the spectators, but the lips of every one of them were moving in prayer. It was clear that they had been taught to repeat the name of God and to call on God for deliverance. I can only describe the silence and the worship and the pain upon the faces

of these people, who were seated in prayer, as reminding me of the shadow of the Cross. What was happening to them was truly, in some dim way, a crucifixion. The Akalis were undergoing their baptism of fire, and they cried to God for help out of the depth of their agony of spirit.

"One thing I have not mentioned which was significant of all that I have written concerning the spirit of the suffering endured. It was very rarely that I witnessed an Akali Sikh, who went forward to suffer, flinch from a blow when it was struck. Apart from the instinctive and involuntary reaction of the muscles that has the appearance of a slight shrinking back, there was nothing so far as I can remember, that could be called a deliberate avoidance of the blows struck. The blows were received one by one without resistance and without a sign of fear."

### JAITO MORCHA

*Akhand Path* was disrupted by the police of Nabha State, Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha was dethroned on the ground that he had strong national inclinations. It was he who moved the Anand Marriage bill in the Legislative Council. It was vehemently opposed by Arya Samajists and some Sanatanist Sikhs. The bill was, however, passed as an Act in 1911 which resulted in breaking away from Hindu ways of marriage. Similarly, struggle for *Kirpan* and *Jhatka* meat resulted in differences from Hindus. The whole purpose was to reconstruct the socio-religious distinction of the Khalsa. It stimulated the community to its pristine purity which ultimately resulted in liberating the Sikh shrines from the clutches of corrupt Mahants. Thus the end of 19th century and beginning of 20th century saw the awakening in liberating the Sikhs from priestly class and adopting *Rahit Maryada* of Khalsa. The adoption of Punjabi language in Gurmukhi script, accentuated the cultural segregation between Sikhs and non Sikhs.

## REVIEWS

### JAPJI SAHIB – WAY TO GOD IN SIKHISM –

A REVIEW BY GURDEV SINGH\*

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*Author : Maneshwar S Chahal*

*Published by : Prakash Books India Pvt. Ltd. 1, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi – 110 002*

*Pages: 321+xvii; Price: Not mentioned*

*Edition : First*

The book's subtitle – *Way to God in Sikhism* – optimally purveys the quintessence of the subject matter of the book. With intelligence and verve, Maneshwar Singh Chahal has seized the true spirit and significance of Guru Nanak's sublime *bani* Japuji and presented a compact and perspicuous exegesis for the benefit of both the erudite and the lay.

Chahal's objective is to present easily understandable exposition of the lofty spiritual grandeur of central theme of Japuji to the English-knowing people. The author comprehensively covers the subject analyzing the relevant facets. Beyond a mere overview, the treatise contains perceptive commentaries and closely reasoned critiques of various aspects of the *bani* Japuji.

Idiolectical terms from various languages used in Japuji have been etymologically explained lucidly. Cosmogonic, mythological, historical references, such as, *Yugas – satya, treta, duvapār, kali, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Indra, Dharamraj, Chitragept, Khand – dharma khand, karam khand* etc. etc., *Amritvela, Mokh, Teerath, Dhawal, Ath-sath, Kateba, Mohnian, Khintha, Ayee-panthi, Ridh-Sidh, Dharmal, Mashkat*, etc., etc., have been elaborated neatly to enable the reader comprehend these easily. The writing is crisp, research impressive, inferences adroit and conclusions

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sound. On the whole, it is a compact but comprehensive commentary. Years of meticulous work has gone into the study of Japuji and earlier commentaries on this *bani*. Various references are studiously analysed and methodically arranged. It is an accomplishment of sound merit and scholarship. The author has deftly undertaken the stupendous task of carefully analyzing the tenets and credo clearly and pithily. He has, with thankful acknowledgements, adverted to earlier commentaries to put forth comparative views and thus make his own contribution creditably more useful. He makes intelligent and perceptive comments on earlier commentaries and sums up his conclusions unambiguously.

To enable the reader grasp the pivotal and riveting nuances of Guru Nanak's Japuji, Chahal preambles his commentary on this *bani* with a brief account of historical, family and social context of the creator of Japuji.

Maneshwar Singh Chahal has a befitting ancestry to be a worthy writer on the subject. His parents, hailing from Gurdas Nangal – the last citadel of Baba Banda Bahadur – were epitome of nobility and they rendered remarkable service for social upliftment in Gurdaspur. Chahal's oblige noblesse, besides immense knowledge of ethical, historical, religious and spiritual lore of Punjab spurred him to take up the profound task of expounding the contents of Japuji Sahib. He has done quite well and presented a coherent, erudite and compact treatise.

He graduated in Engineering, had a stint in the army and thereafter a distinguished carrier in the Indian Administrative Service rising to the highest echelons in the administrative framework with the Punjab and Central Governments. He also worked as Chairman, Punjab and Sind Bank and a member of the Punjab State Human Rights Commission.

Reader would surely benefit from the refreshing scholarship of Maneshwar Singh Chahal.

Having heralded his advent in this genre of writing, Chahal is already deep into his next exegesis on another sublime *bani* – *Assa Di var*.

**SRI GUR PANTH PARKASH (RATTAN S BHANGOO)**  
**(ENGLISH TRANSLATION)**

**A REVIEW BY GURDEV SINGH\***

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*Translation by : Prof Kulwant Singh*

*Published by : Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh*

*Pages: 529+xliv; Price: : Rs 400/-*

*Volume : First; Edition : First*

The volume in hand covers the floating historical developments taking place in North-West India particularly in the Punjab region during the declining years of Mughal rule in India and emergence of new Forces that ultimately eclipsed the dominant power of the day. It is a period account penned down by Rattan Singh Bhangoo who belonged to the line of a family that had remained prominently conspicuous by being an active player in decimating the authoritarian and cruel domination of the ruling class of the day and providing encouragement and inducement to the emerging forces of socio-political change. Written in poetic genre of the day, the account uses the current medium of expression and vocabulary with which close familiarity is to be established to grasp the full import of the expression and the sentiment behind the detail. Floating accounts of happenings have a high content of truth and reliability as they are transmitted by word of mouth from generation to generation. These accounts are like heavier materials that are not easily carried away by the swift current of the times as they pass through closer scrutiny.

The whole account is prompted by the curiosity of English officers of East India Company who wanted to be fully conversant with the political and cultural background of the region they had set their sights upon for incorporation in their domain in India. To have a

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comprehensive grasp of the situation, they tried different sources and Rattan Singh Bhangoo proved to be the most rewarding who provided the most elaborate and exhaustive canvas of the events and their analysis in respect of the rise of Sikh power. Earlier accounts in this respect were sketchy and biased.

The narrative opens with the perceptible appearance of the Sikhs on the politico-military scene of the times in the wake of the sale of this territory left by a Maratha employed disgruntled French General to the British. The British Commanding officer Sir David Ochterlony entered Delhi but soon the Sikh Forces attacked and laid a siege to Delhi. All this shocked and startled the British and prompted them to know the maximum about the Sikhs whom they perceived as potential rivals from different sources.

The treatise, sub-divided in episodes, gives a comprehensive detail about the Sikhs, their religion, the hierarchy of their guilds and Gurus and splinter Sikh sects like the Gangushaias. The subsequent episodes discuss in detail the prevailing social and political panorama of the times. The geneology and lineage of the Sikh Gurus bear clear relationship to the evolution of Sikhism, particularly the transformation of the faith from only reformatory to the active politico-military organisation call of the times.

The rise of the Khalsa to checkmate the Mughal tyranny was a logical consequence to save the oppressed and the exploited. Up to Episode 26, detailed references have been made to Guru Gobind Singh's movement in the Malwa region to which he moved after leaving Anandpur Sahib for reasons of strategy and establishing a strong defensive base there to face the increasing pressure of Mughal and allied powers.

The Volume acquires momentum with the description of movement of Guru Gobind Singh to the south and his encounter with Banda Singh Bahadur. This cut-off period provides a fast pace to the developments and, with intimate description of the events, pins down the reader's attention. Banda Singh Bahadur's exploits at the bidding of Guru Gobind Singh to unite and lead the Sikhs to their destined goal and to avenge the death of the Sahibzadas as also to fire the zeal of the Khalsa to do away with the suppression and cruelties of the ruling class, have been very brilliantly detailed by the descriptions of the numerous expeditions conducted. Many out-of-routine exposition



like the killing of the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh contrary to the general belief of their being bricked alive sound like a revelation. There are situations where the reader gets slightly jolted where he is confronted with descriptions that do not fit into the normal conceptual regime of human nature like the necromantic powers of Banda Singh Bahadur. The mention of Bhai Nand Lal acting as a go-between Farrukh Siyar and the Guru Mother Mata Sundri has been disputed and proven untrue. The above-mentioned facts do shock the Sikh psyche as it directly dents their faith. On the other hand, the parting of ways between Banda Singh Bahadur and the Tat Khalsa has been elaborately described and fortifies the Sikh religious laws that the deviation from the righteous path brings divine retribution.

Episodes from 61 upto the end of the narrative describe the last days of Banda Singh Bahadur, Mughal attack on Banda Singh Bahadur's Fort, the ensuing battle and capture of Banda Singh Bahadur and his death. Episode 70 describes in a dramatic way the death of Farrukh Siyar.

The volume is a monumental contribution towards having an intimate feel of the historical developments of the times, particularly the origin of the Khalsa Panth, its evolution, nurturing, trials and tribulations. It is packed with sound facts and corroboratory material that is authentic and relevant.

The translator and interpreter Prof Kulwant Singh has done a yeoman's service by undertaking the task of translating this book into English. It involves not only an apt rendition but also demands a clear and deep understanding of the subtle nuances of the medium of expression, the tone and tenor of the idiom and the spirit of the text embodying the vision of its author. On these three counts, English translation is superb, at places more readable than the original. The translator's marvellous adaption of the four-line stanza for translating each of Bhangoo's two-line couplets in a free verse, equally compact, rhythmical and racy as the original throughout the volume is really unique. One is reminded of the chaste, telling and terse heroic couplets of the 18<sup>th</sup> century great classical English poet Alexander Pope. With the availability of this English translation along with the transliteration in Roman script, a long-felt need of a vast section of readership of Sikh history all over the world, who were otherwise handicapped in reading in original this great historico-poetical source of Sikh history, has been met.

The critical Introduction by the translator presents a comprehensive critique and an objective evaluation of this great epic of Sikh history. It not only pinpoints the excessive mythologization on this part of its author, of certain major characters such as Banda Singh Bahadur in contravention of the well-documented military exploits of this great Sikh warrior and a brilliant military strategist, but also explodes Bhangoo's narrative account of certain events such as Mata Sundri's alleged edicts to Banda Singh Bahadur, based solely on his oral sources. Some of the Punjabi editors and scholars in their otherwise well-edited versions of this epic have glossed over these contentious issues either intentionally or inadvertently. Moreover, it brings out Bhangoo's poetic vision of a paradoxical relationship between one's ideology and progeny which often work at cross purposes to the detriment of each other and his vindication of Sikh Gurus' propagation of their ideology even at the cost of their own as well as their progeny's lives in the great tradition of earlier spiritual prophets. It also gives a proper generic classification to this epic by placing it at par with the greatest epics of the world in both the Western and Eastern Canons of classical literature. Elucidation of innumerable epic similes in the footnotes and references at the end of each episode brings out the full significance of the intended qualities of epic's *dramatis personae*. Innumerable mistakes in chronological dates of major events in the original text have been pointed out and corresponding exact dates given in the references.

The additional merit of the treatise has been enhanced by the highly informative and scholarly additions made by Dr Kharak Singh and Dr Kirpal Singh in the Preface and the subsequent write-up, respectively, along with Prof Kulwant Singh's exhaustive Introduction. These three pieces are a key to the proper and thorough understanding of the narrative. The reader will do well to go through these before reading the text in translation.

The work is, on the whole, free from common incidences of printer's devil and has been brought out beautifully. The general getup, title and back page displaying the imposing portraits of Sikh heroes together with concise information on the blurbs, are appealing both to the eye and the perceptive mind. Priced moderately at Rs 400/- for a 529 pages volume, the book is indeed a scintillating achievement of the Institute of Sikh Studies.

## THE SIKH MARTYRS

A REVIEW BY GAJINDAR SINGH\*

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*Author : Lakshman Singh*

*Edited by : Dr Prithpal Singh Kapur*

*Published by : Singh Brothers, Amritsar & with Association DSGMC, New Delhi.*

*Pages: 187+index; Price: Not mentioned*

The book has been re-published after 76 years of its first appearance by the approval of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee, dedicated to the quadcentenary of the Martyrdom anniversary of Guru Arjun Dev ji. It is a befitting tribute to all the martyrs in the Sikh history, of which the Fifth Nanak was the first to show the way by his serene and peaceful acceptance of the Lord's Will, against gruesome tortures to break his will. It stood in good stead for the galaxy of the noble souls who followed him to fight and die for the high ideals of the Faith with rare equanimity and equipoise.

Bhagat Lakshman Singh wrote the book on the Sikh Martyrs with loving care and dedication. He has mentioned in the Introduction that there were hardly any books in English by Indian authors at that time, although there was sufficient literature in vernacular. Nowadays, we have a large number of well-researched and documented books by eminent authors in English, besides many other foreign languages, with detailed accounts of the martyrs. Sikh History is centred on the deeds of the brave martyrs who stood their ground against extreme pressure and utter cruelty by the state and the opposing communities intolerant of the Sikh ethos and their path-breaking doctrine. Yet, the present book presents the theme of Sikh martyrs in a vivid but concise manner in "energetic" style as described by the editor, Dr P P S Kapur,

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\* #2983, Sector 61, Mohali (Pb)

an able and well-known historian and Sikh writer, formerly Pro-Vice Chancellor, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. In his masterly Editorial Introduction, he has described the factual conditions and the prejudices of the administration of the times and the resentment of the major communities, Hindus and Muslims alike, against the egalitarian Sikh concepts which, according to them, were harmful and objectionable to their dogmas. It is a welcome addition to the Author's Introduction, which sets the mood for the sombre subject of organised killings in cold blood.

The Editor has meticulously gone through the narrative and mentioned in footnotes, errors in the original without amending the text as written by Bhagat Lakshman Singh. The only exception is the chapter on Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, which was not included by the author in his original publication in 1928. The Editor rightly felt this as an omission in the list of the prominent martyrs and decided that Baba Banda Singh Bahadur deserved a place of honour in the list of the Sikh Heroes who underwent inhuman treatment and utmost cruelty but adhered to their Sikh ideals and doctrine.

Another noticeable omission is the absence of narrative about Bhai Sati Das, an ardent Sikh accompanying Guru Tegh Bahadur, along with Bhai Mati Das and Bhai Dayala. He was suffocated to death wrapped in cotton and set on fire, for his refusal to abjure the Master and his Faith. It was a vain bid to influence and inspire awe in the Guru.

The chapters, 'The Carrier of the Haideri Flag', and 'Turanian Atrocities' make interesting reading. The author's last note on 'Guru Gobind Singh's Cosmopolitan Ideal' is a fitting tribute to the great Guru who had not an iota of antagonism against any community, Muslim or Hindu, despite the sufferings he endured and violent opposition he faced from his childhood till his passing away, and remained steadfast in his benign treatment of all as he firmly believed in '*manas ki jatti sabhe eke pehchan bo.*'

Bhagat Lakshman Singh treats impartially the violent opposition to the Sikh movement by the Muslims and Hindus alike. He does not blame Islam as a religion in the antagonism of the Muslims towards Sikhs. He considers it more of a political expediency in the turmoil of the weakening Mughal authority of Delhi and the scheming of the

wily governors of Lahore and Sirhind, who were watching their own vested interests in siding with Abdali and even their overtures to the Sikhs to keep their shaky seat. However, it was a struggle of life and death to which the Khalsa was grimly committed against overlords of Delhi and Kabul who rightly gauged the danger to their supremacy from one disturbing factor, the emergence of the Khalsa.

The narration is racy and poignant and keeps the interest of the reader steadfast, while it is written in simple style. It should be widely circulated, especially to the youth to rekindle their appreciation of the spade-work done so admirably by our founding fathers, with very little resources and repeated stunning blows like the *Chhota Ghalughara*, *Vada Ghalughara* and the erasing of the Harimandir Sahib itself. Yet, they did not lose heart but persistently flocked to the banner and cause of Sikhism in ever greater numbers. There is adequate material in this book to arouse interest and inspire them through the true stories of sacrifice against heaviest odds. They may get the message that the going has been tough for the Sikhs to stick to their ideology from the very beginning, and not only a recent phenomenon. And the marvel is that the Sikhs could not be exterminated, but rather they multiplied in spite of such ruthlessness and hostile state machinery and propaganda.

The publishers, Messrs Singh Brothers have admirably produced the book with fine printing and quality paper.

□

*O blind man, pride thou not on besmearing thy body with ashes.  
This wise, O naked man, thou shalt unite not with thy Lord.  
O fool why hast thou forgotten the Lord's Name?  
At the last moment, it shall be of avail to thee.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 1189

ਮਤੁ ਭਾਸਮ ਅੰਧੁਲੇ ਗਰਬਿ ਜਾਹਿ ॥ ਇਨ ਬਿਧਿ ਨਾਗੇ ਜੋਗੁ ਨਾਹਿ ॥  
ਮੂੜੇ ਕਾਹੇ ਬਿਸਾਰਿਓ ਤੈ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮ ॥ ਅੰਤ ਕਾਲਿ ਤੇਰੈ ਆਵੈ ਕਾਮ ॥

## SRI SARB LOH GRANTH SAHIB JI

A REVIEW BY GURBAKSH SINGH USA\*

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*Editor: Prof Satwant Singh Dhillon*

*Published by: Singh Sahib Baba Santa Singh ji, Jathedar Chhiamwain Krori, Akali Buddha Dal  
(Chakarwati) Hindustan, (Punjab)*

*Pages: Two volumes, 388+1065; Price: Not mentioned*

Its importance lies mainly in the hymns which are selected from it to be recited/quoted regarding the greatness and uniqueness of the Guru Khalsa Panth. The *granth* was not easily available till its copies were searched, reviewed, edited and then printed under the guidance and efforts of Jathedar Baba Santa Singh of the Budha Dal.

According to the editor, the *granth* remained in the south and it reached north India as late as 1803. He came to know of 24 Birs (recensions) of this *granth*. From the study of these, which he could actually locate and obtain, he prepared the current copy of the publication with meanings of important and key words / phrases given as footnotes. These notes and meanings, which cover an appreciable part of each page help the readers to understand the epic. In the absence of these explanations, it is not possible even to understand the story of the epic.

The name of the *granth* is *Mangla Charan Puran*, its hero is Sarb Loh, hence it got its popular name, under which it has been printed. It is a great epic describing the wars between gods and demons. The style, words and phrases are very much similar to those of the wars between Chandi Devi and demons described in the *Dasam Granth*.

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The *granth* starts with a very long invocation, *mangal*, to Bhawani Devi and Maya Lachhmi Devi as given below:

ੴ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹ  
ਸ੍ਰੀ ਭਵਾਨੀ ਜੀ ਸਹਾਇ, ਸ੍ਰੀ ਲਛਮੀ ਜੀ ਸਹਾਇ ।  
ਉਸਤਤਿ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਮਾਯਾ ਲਛਮੀ ਜੀ ਕੀ ॥

The *mangal* of goddess Lakshmi tells that the author had a faith in God Vishnu and his spouse Lakshmi. In the epic, Vishnu is described as the saviour of Shiva and Brahma, the head gods.

The epic begins with the attack by the demon Bhim Nad on gods (Inder and his associates). Bhim refused to listen to the reconciliation advice, starts the war, is defeated and killed. At the death of his brother, the head of the demons Beerj Nad gets very angry and sends his dreadful army to take revenge from the gods. Description of the army on both sides and their preparation for the war is given in great and interesting details.

To avoid war, god Vishnu sends his messenger, Nard, for peaceful talks and settlement. The ego-filled mad demon does not listen to him. Devastating war takes place, all the brave warriors of the demon get killed, and the gods win the battle and become haughty, egoist after their victory.

This demoralizing defeat of his generals upsets Beerj Nad still more and he himself launches a big attack on Inder Puri with a huge army. Inder also calls all gods including Brahma and Shiva; they come with their full strength. Under the supervision of Vishnu, the gods show their great fighting skill. However, many gods including Shiva and Brahma become unconscious or are killed in the battle. Vishnu gives them new life by giving *amrit* to them. After a long sea-saw battle, the demons defeat gods and take over Inder Puri. Vishnu guides gods to appeal to Mahakal living in the sea (of milk), who consoles them and assures them that he would take birth as Sarb Loh and destroy the demons.

Sarb Loh appears in Inder Puri, gods welcome him with great devotion, and a big feast is held in his honor: Sarb Loh deposes Ganesh as his messenger of peace to advise Beerj Nad to vacate Inder Puri

and let gods and demons rule their own territories. Under the strong influence of ego, the demon refuses to relent and return Inder Puri to gods.

A bloody war starts and the loss of blood creates a sea. Such a war was never fought earlier. Half way while describing the killings in the war, the author changes the topic to write an independent composition not connected with the epic, hymns eulogising Khalsa (they are mentioned with minor editings in *keertan pothis*), then the author continues again with the war scenes.

Beerj Nad is convinced of his defeat and of his sure death casting shadows before him. Rather, he philosophises it, and he feels lucky. It is good fortune that he will be face-to-face with Sarb Loh, while people pray and perform penances to see him. After being killed by him, his soul will be entitled to live in heaven. After the death of Beraj Nad, Sarb Loh hands over the rule of Inder Puri to Inder and himself becomes a part of cosmos, becomes invisible.

Regarding the moral lesson of the epic the author states that the war actually is between Truth (Sarb Loh) and falsehood (Beerj Nad). In the beginning the egoist demon does not listen, he is defeated and killed. The gods become haughty and ego filled after killing the brave generals of the demon. They get punished by Beerj Nad who takes over their kingdom. Suffering from egomania, the demon does not reconcile to return the kingdom to Inder. As a result he loses everything including his life.

This war between virtues and vices proves that to begin with falsehood (vices) appears to have the upper hand but finally truth (virtues) becomes victorious. People should practise humility for peace.



## NEWS & VIEWS

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### SEMINAR – THE CONCEPT OF SRI AKAL TAKHT SAHIB

A seminar on the Concept of Sri Akal Takht Sahib was conducted by the Institute of Sikh Studies (IOSS), Chandigarh, on 11-12<sup>th</sup> November, 2006, in the auditorium of Shivalik Public School, Phase 6, Mohali.

The seminar was inaugurated by Singh Sahib Giani Gurbachan Singh, Head Granth, Sri Harimandir Sahib, who also released a book "*Sri Gur Panth Parkash by Rattan Singh Bhangoo*" (English translation by Prof Kulwant Singh). The book was published by the IOSS.

The keynote address was given by Dr Kharak Singh. Some of the prominent scholars from various walks of life, who presented their papers, were :

Dr Kirpal Singh, Dr Sukhdial Singh, Dr Gurbakhsh Singh, Giani Kewal Singh, S Gurcharan Singh Mehta, Dr Surinder Singh, Brig Hardit Singh, S Santokh Singh (IRS), Dr Balkar Singh, S Harsimran Singh, S Raghbir Singh, Er Gurcharan Singh Sethi, Dr Suba Singh, Dr H S Dilgir, Principal Swaranjit Singh, Dr Gurnam Kaur, S Gajinder Singh, Dr Birendra Kaur, Lt Gen Kartar Singh, Dr Gurmit Singh, S Pritam Singh Kohli.

The seminar was set in motion by the keynote address by Dr Kharak Singh. It was felt that while the need for an effective and powerful Akal Takht, the central authority of the Sikhs, was never greater, with the Panth now spread all over the globe, the prevailing state of affairs is extremely disturbing. The Akal Takht is ill-equipped to cope with mounting complex problems like apostasy, challenges to Sikh identity, enquiries relating to *gurmata*, problems of Sikh diaspora, etc. As a result, some vital issues facing the Panth are often neglected,

while decisions on others are implemented more in their breach than in compliance. There have been frequent demonstrations at the Akal Takht, a thing unheard of in the past. It has become difficult for the Akal Takht to keep the Panth together, much less to provide the guidance and lead expected from it.

The Akal Takht, being the seat of spiritual as well as temporal authority for the Panth or the global Sikh community the situation demands radical reforms. The response to the call from scholars and well-wishers of the Panth has been very encouraging. A number of useful suggestions have come from the scholars, some of which are enumerated below:-

1. To exercise its authority, constitution of a board of 11 or more eminent members, well versed in *gurmata* and committed to Sikh ideals, and above party politics drawn from global Sikh community to advise the Jathedar.
2. The position of Jathedar (or whatever designation may be given to him) is indispensable. He should be the spokesman of the Akal Takht, look after its day-to-day functions, and ensure implementation of the decisions.
3. All decisions should be made by the Board according to procedures laid down in a transparent manner and implemented scrupulously.
4. Need to define the relationship between the Akal Takht (created by the Guru) and other four Takhts created subsequently.
5. The institution of Panj Piaras, its role and constitution be clarified.
6. The Akal Takht should be equipped with a separate secretariat and advisory councils to provide the required technical support in the areas of religion, education, economic, international and legal affairs and public relations. The recently formed International Sikh Confederation, with its advisory councils in all major disciplines, is capable of rendering the required assistance to the Akal Takht.
7. All political parties and other Sikh organizations should owe allegiance to the Akal Takht, offer full cooperation and assure compliance of all decisions.
8. As now the Sikhs are spread all over the world, a case may be taken up with the government of India to grant the Akal Takht a special status.

9. The findings, decisions of all advisory committees must be treated as sacred and sacrosanct, and should not be criticised by members individually or in private. All decisions of these committees should be pronounced by the presiding officer of the Akal Takht as *gurmata* from the holy Akal Takht in open forum.
10. The title of Jathedar needs to be changed to a suitable title after due deliberation.
11. All missionary work should be organized under the auspices of Sri Akal Takht.
12. The Institute of Sikh Studies, with its well proven credibility, should set up a multi-disciplinary committee to make an indepth study and suggest an effective institutional setup for Sri Akal Takht Sahib either within the purview of a central legislation, or totally independent of it, so that it can deal with issues concerning the Panth both in India and the diaspora.
13. The Institute of Sikh Studies endeavour to create an effective pressure group for generating consensus on the Sikh religious institutions and reforms and selection of the Akal Takht Jathedar.

— A report by Col Amrik Singh

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SEMINAR – SCHOOL EDUCATION IN PUNJAB

October 1-2, Chandigarh. A two-day seminar on *State of Education* was held in the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh on October 1 & 2, 2006. Prominent educationists, managements, scholars from Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, and Chandigarh participated and resolved to take effective steps to improve the standard of public instruction, especially at the school level and in rural areas.

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#### LUDHIANA CHAPTER, ISC

On November 19, 2006, Dr Kharak Singh, Lt Gen Kartar Singh, Sardar Gurdev Singh, Bhai Ashok Singh, Bibi Baljit Kaur, Sardar Gurpreet Singh, Sardar Bajwa, Sardar Mohinder Singh attended a highly representative meeting of prominent organizations and individuals of Ludhiana in Gurdwara Sarabha Nagar, Ludhiana. They also had deliberations with the office bearers/representatives of Sri Guru

Gobind Singh Study Circle in the latter's office in Model Town Ludhiana. In the Sarabha Nagar meeting, Ludhiana Chapter of the International Sikh Confederation was established.

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JUSTICE MOTA SINGH, QC, VISITS ISC & IOSS

December 4, 2006. Glittering galaxy of scholars and eminent persons from Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Chandigarh met at the office of International Sikh Confederation, to interact with HH Justice Mota Singh, QC of the UK. Problems related to the Sikhs across the globe and their plausible solutions were discussed.

December 8, 2006. Members of the IOSS and a few more scholars held deliberations with Justice Mota Singh at the IOSS office and resolved that concrete programmes should be pursued to ameliorate the lot of the common man, especially in the field of school education.

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### ANNUAL ELECTION OF IOSS

In a meeting of the Institute of Sikh Studies, held on 28th December, 2006, to elect its President for 2007, members paid rich tribute to Sardar Gurdev Singh, IAS (retd) who had held this position for the last five years. Services rendered by him were eulogised, particularly his contribution towards organising the ISC and holding of special seminars on 'Education in Rural Punjab' and 'Sri Akal Takht Sahib'. It was noted that under his guidance, the IOSS made notable headway. Members desired, therefore, that he should continue in office for another year. He, however, regretted that he could not continue, due to his several other engagements.

Under the circumstances, Bhai Ashok Singh Bagrian, the present Secretary of the IOSS and a senior member, well known for his role in Panthic affairs, was unanimously elected as President for the Year 2007.

In deference to the earnest desire of the members, Sardar Gurdev Singh agreed to become Patron of the Institute of Sikh Studies.

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ISC WRITES A LETTER TO CHIEF MINISTER, PUNJAB, ON RURAL EDUCATION

To

Hon'ble Chief Minister, Punjab
Capt Amarinder Singh
Raj Bhawan, Chandigarh

Sir,

The Institute of Sikh Studies and the International Sikh Confederation organized a Seminar on the above subject on 1st and 2nd Oct, 06. A number of Educationists and scholars from all walks of life contributed papers and a number of other intellectuals took active part in the two-day Seminar.

NGOs such as the Quality Education Foundation, Chandigarh, Nishkam Sikh Welfare Society, New Delhi and Akal Academy, Baru Sahib took part in the Seminar. These NGOs have carried out adequate research and some of them have set up schools in rural areas which are producing good results. The Tughalwal Model of School Education in Gurdaspur district, which is a unique model of education for the rural masses, featured prominently in the discussions.

A copy of the Resolutions passed at the culmination of the Seminar is attached at Appendix 'A' for your kind information. The Seminar constituted a panel consisting of Dr Kharak Singh, Dr Sardara Singh Johl, Lt Gen Kartar Singh Gill, PVSM (Retd), Principal G S Shergill, S.Pritam Singh Bhopal and Prof Kulwant Singh to draft a comprehensive report and various memoranda to be submitted to the concerned authorities. The Report is enclosed at Appendix 'B'.

Keeping in view the critical situation as highlighted in the Seminar, we would request your personal attention in putting into effect the recommendations as contained in our memorandum attached.

(Lt Gen Kartar Singh)
Chief Executive Officer

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#### APPENDIX 'A'

#### RESOLUTION

After deliberating and discussing the problem of virtual collapse of the education system, especially at the school level, in the state of Punjab at a two-day seminar on October 1 & 2, 2006 at the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh and the overall recommendations of the eminent scholars and educationists who participated in the seminar, the interim Executive Committee of the International Sikh Confederation (ISC) has unanimously resolved to establish a Sikh Education Fund (SEF) – on the lines of Jewish Education Fund (JEF) – to the tune of one billion US dollars to empower the Sikh youth

with the latest and the best tools of quality education in the form of scholarships, freeships and other incentives after making a thorough screening and objective assessment of the needy, deserving and meritorious students at various levels of school and higher education. The committee appeals to the Sikh religious organizations, affluent Sikh corporate houses, family trusts and individuals to contribute liberally to this fund and help the ISC to launch on this most urgently needed project for empowering the Sikh youth in order to enable them to cope up with the highest challenges of the fast-changing modern globalised world, to be stake holders in the major areas of global economy, civil society and international affairs.

The contributions, in the form of cheques, drafts and other available financial instruments may be sent to ISC Sikh Education funds (SEF), at Plot No 1, Kendri Singh Sabha, Sector 28-A, Madhya Marg, Chandigarh

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APPENDIX 'B'

MEMORANDUM TO PUNJAB GOVERNMENT

In a two-day Seminar on the "State of School Education in Rural Punjab" held on October 1-2, 06, at the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh, eminent Sikh scholars put forth their views. Many valuable suggestions along with concrete recommendations were made. The International Sikh Confederation has been mandated in the Conference to take cognizance of these issues and work out an action plan to bring about a distinct improvement in the state of School Education in rural Punjab. We have, therefore, prepared a Memorandum for action by the State Government in this regard.

Education is a State subject and it is the duty of the State to take serious cognizance of the state of Government Schools in rural areas. Only a small percentage of the rural population can afford to send their children to Public/Private Schools. A large percentage of children depend on Government Schools for their basic education, which really lays the foundation for further career prospects. Thus it is vital that our State Government takes serious note of the precarious situation of our primary and secondary education setup in rural areas. We need to act now and catch up with other states as we are today lagging far behind.

PRESENT SCENARIO IN RURAL AREAS OF PUNJAB

The general consensus of the various speakers who presented their papers during our Seminar, was that the state of education available to our children in the villages, is alarming. There are very few higher secondary schools in the rural areas that have science subjects. Those that have them, have very poor teaching infrastructure. Teachers do not stay in these schools and absenteeism is rampant. Headmasters / Principals lack the will and power to enforce discipline and accountability; hence teachers are just not accountable. As a consequence, students do not opt for science or commerce subjects. Thus, they lack the acumen to compete for professional higher education. Our Agriculture University has almost all students from urban non-farming families. If this is the situation in the subjects of the Agriculture stream, one can well imagine the situation in respect of engineering, medical and other professional subjects.

The data on School results submitted by PHRO report in 2006, mentioned that the results of 79 senior secondary schools for 10th and 10+2 classes was 0%, of 219 similar schools was less than 10%, and of 40 schools 10% for the last 10 years. These results have emerged despite the mass scale copying in these examinations in majority of centers in rural Punjab schools.

The findings of two studies conducted in Patiala Block III by the Nishkam Sikh Welfare Council were also shocking. A carefully selected sample of 384 students in Class VI from rural and urban secondary schools revealed that only 2% boys and 4% girls passed in Mathematics and only 12% boys and 14% girls qualified in Punjabi.

In May 2001, the Punjab Elementary Education Board Project Committee, Patiala, working under the aegis of the Nishkam Sikh Welfare Council (Regd.), New Delhi, held a District Scholarship Test for all such children who secured 70% or more marks in the SCERT in Class V Annual examination, 2001. They had to select 20 students on merit basis for award of scholarships of the value of Rs.150/- per month for three years covering Classes VI to VIII. The results were dismal, as students who had secured 70% or more marks in their annual examinations through government schools managed to secure on an average a mere 4.7% in Punjabi, 2.3% in Hindi, 5% in Mathematics, 8% in Social Science and as low as 2-3% in General Knowledge.

The IOSS and the ISC have been sounding the alarm bell earlier also. During the Seminar on 'School Education in Rural Punjab' held on 1st and 2nd Oct, 2006, eminent educationists and public agencies engaged in education were invited. We do hope that their deliberations and practical suggestions for improvement will be taken serious note of by the Government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of suggestions and proposals were put forth during the Seminar. These were debated by a Committee of selected members with Dr S S Johl in the Chair. This Committee's recommendations are listed below.

INFRASTRUCTURE

A majority of our Schools in rural areas lack the following basic necessities:-

- (a) Proper accommodation and furniture
- (b) Toilet facilities for both boys and girls.
- (c) Well equipped Libraries.
- (d) Laboratories for science subjects.
- (e) Computer classrooms.
- (f) Rudimentary playing grounds and games equipment for even common activities such as football, hockey, basketball, volleyball, cricket, etc.

BUDGET

Our present budget allotment of 2% is lower than the national average. Government should target it at 6%.

As a short-term measure there is an urgent need to allot Rs.2 *laks* to each rural primary school and Rs.5 *laks* to each rural high/ higher secondary school to meet their basic infrastructure needs. Long term planning and required budget should be allotted in addition to the above, in a differentiated manner with emphasis on developing infrastructure in rural Govt. Schools.

STRUCTURAL CHANGES

- (a) Powers / functions of DPIs, DEO's and BPEO's should be well defined for better enforcement of accountability.
- (b) Principals, Headmasters and Head Teachers should have full authority and be totally accountable for results.

- (c) Duration of postings should be adequate. We recommend a minimum period of 3 years.
- (d) Inspection teams and their procedures should be achievable and well defined. This will enable them to enforce higher standards of teaching, discipline and management. They should also be fully accountable for results.
- (e) *Panchayats* / Local bodies should be involved with defined role only to provide an independent feedback on attendance, dedication of teachers, adequacy of facilities and performance of schools.
- (f) PSEB should arrange regular training of teachers to upgrade and modernize their teaching ability. Regional centers should run refresher courses at regular intervals. These centers should lay stress on quality teaching and motivational abilities of teachers.

Removing the deficiency of teachers in rural schools should receive top priority of the Govt. All vacancies should be filled before the next session starting in 2007.

Qualification requirements for each subject should be strictly adhered to by the selection board. Particular care be taken to select quality teachers to teach English and Science subjects.

Tenure should be fixed and strictly adhered to. This is only possible if the powers to transfer are in technical hands and political interference is avoided.

Teachers who have produced results and volunteer to stay on beyond their tenure should be given special consideration by merit.

Voluntary retirement schemes should be formulated to get rid of weak elements.

CURRICULUM AND EXAMINATIONS

Once again the whole system needs to be re-examined with regard to :-

- (a) Including science and commerce subjects in rural schools.
- (b) Moral education be made a compulsory subject.
- (c) Study of existing models of school education and selection of one or more models to cater to different strata of rural population.
- (d) Imparting of Technical and Vocational Education to enable youth to avail of employment opportunities at par with urban youth.
- (e) Enhance communication skills, improve teaching of English,

science and mathematics among students in rural areas.

- (f) Achievements/results of schools/teachers should be measured in terms of their students getting admission in high/secondary school, college and university education, specially professional education / administration / defence services and self employment.

CONCLUSION

It is encouraging to note that the Punjab Government has decided to set up an Education Commission to deal with the problem. All VCs in State Universities have been nominated as its members. Besides, recently the State Education Minister has announced plans to recruit 11,500 teachers, 1600 computer teachers and 700 physical training instructors, on an emergency basis to make up the deficiency of teachers in schools. We do hope that quality of the selected teachers will not be diluted and the selection process will place merit and character qualities foremost during selection. The Education Commission's scope could be enhanced by including some members with experience of School Education. We want to believe that this is not just a pre-election platitude, and that the recommendations of the Commission will be implemented.

NGOs such as the Akal Academy, Nishkam Sikh Welfare Council, Tughalwal Model of School Education at Riarki (Distt Gurdaspur) and various NRIs have done excellent work to improve education facilities in rural areas of Punjab. Our Government needs to dovetail their efforts into a coordinated rural education plan.

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### DIRECTORY OF EMINENT SIKHS AND ORGANISATIONS

It is proposed to prepare a directory of Sikh organisations as well as eminent Sikh luminaries anywhere in the world. Readers are, therefore, requested to give us the names they know, with following particulars:

#### Individual

|                      |               |           |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Name                 | Address       | Telephone |
| Email                | Position held | Fax       |
| Any other particular |               |           |

### Organisations

|                        |                     |               |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Name                   | Aims & Objectives   | Annual budget |
| Year of inception      | Area of operation   | Membership    |
| Present office bearers | Address             | Telephone     |
| Email                  | Anyother particular | Fax           |

~~~

Letters to Editor

Dear Editor

I read both interesting articles *Creating the Image of Prophet Mohammed* by Verpal Singh and *Global Terrorism* by Harish Puri; AOSS-April-June 2006, they appear scholarly but one-sided and biased. I have also heard from visiting Indian leaders similar language. To me that represents ignorance. What I have seen in NY for over 38 years is quite different. I do keep in touch with India all the time because whatever I am today, it is because of Mother India. I am most happy that India has the most honest PM, most competent chief of army staff and highly competent economist as Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission.

It is true that America is the most powerful country since cold war. I felt most secure being between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, but my hopes were shattered the day I saw second WTC tower crumbling, the first I missed as I was rounding in the hospital. I trembled at the atrocity and remembered February 1947 when a Muslim shoemaker butchered my uncle with a *Rambi*. Soon we learned that 2978 innocent people died on 9/11/2001. Only one, I knew personally, a young Sikh lady, child of my acquaintance. One survivor, 79 year old, who had worked for 59 years for the state of NY and is still under my care.

Whatever President Bush did for the prevention and protection against terrorism of Americans is justified. Professor Puri should have given number of killed civilians in war in 1991. America knew in 2001 that the terrorists were trained and coached in Pakistan/Afghanistan; that is why Musharraaf now says that he was told that Pakistan would go to stone age if any more terrorist came to USA. UNO had advised Iraqi dictator many times to allow verification of his WMD that he had been bragging of sending body bags of Americans. When he kept on repeating his threats, and information

available at that time, USA attacked Iraq, killed his sons and captured Saddam Hussein. Yes in this war more than three thousand young American soldiers attained martyrdom and more than 30,000 are injured. If a few thousand future *Jihadis* have been killed, is that a big deal? How I know all this? My son is a captain in the US forces.

Please do remember that if India is making economic progress, USA has a lot to do with it. More than a billion dollar per year America pays for outsourcing. How many dollars are paid to Pakistan for similar work? America likes India because India is the largest democracy since Empire left. Yes we all were hurt when innocent citizens were killed in 1984. But now there is peace and prosperity and let us keep friendship with well-wishers and not with those who attack borders of India and USA.

Respectfully
Jodh Singh, NY
<xjsa@aol.com>

~~~~~

#### TRANSLATION OF GURU GRANTH SAHIB IN ENGLISH

Dear Editor,

I take liberty to express my concern on the article of Professor Sarjit Singh published in AOSS (Vol VIII, Issue 3) July-Sept 2006 wherein he has raised a few points on Sri Guru Granth Sahib, which needs urgent attention of Sikh scholars.

For example, misquoting the non-controversial pronunciation of symbol *ੴ* (*Ekoankar*) as *ੴ* (*Ikoli*) is a result of his lack of knowledge of *gurbani*. The first symbol on first page of SGGS is *ੴ* (*Ekoankar*) and every one in Sikh households, without any interference from any one would say *Ekoankar* (ਏਕੰਕਾਰੁ), The symbol *ੴ* in SGGS is not a calligraphy of *ੴ*. The symbol *ੴ* on the first page of SGGS is repeated about 560 times. The word ਏਕੰਕਾਰੁ / ਏਕੰਕਾਰ / ਏਕ / ਇਕ and ਓਅੰਕਾਰ is used about 10/1, 135, 24, 2 times, respectively, in SGGS upto page 520 and *bindi* on *kanna* (ਕੰਨੇ ਤੇ ਬਿੰਦੀ) is used about 424 times upto page 520. In *gurbani* grammar, with or without *bindi* denote different meanings.

The writer of SGGS, Bhai Gurdas has explained the first word or symbol *ੴ* in *Vaar* 3; *Pauri* 15 (ਮੂਲ ਮੰਤ੍ਰ ਦਾ ਗੁੱਝਾ ਭੇਦ):

ਏਕਾ ਏਕੰਕਾਰੁ ਲਿਖਿ ਦੇਖਾਲਿਆ।

ਉੜਾ ਓਅੰਕਾਰੁ ਪਾਸਿ ਬਹਾਲਿਆ।

In English there are number of words which are not spoken as per their spelling for instance : Lieutenant, know, wrong, psalm, listen, Xanthic but are pronounced : Leftinant, no, rong, sam, lisen, zanthic, respectively. In English language, all words are not phonetics.

To measure the merit of *gurbani's* teachings, it is essential to have all knowledge of nuances of *gurbani* grammar and the intricate teachings of modulating the voice accordingly. This writer, I observe, is compounding the established / accepted recital of *gurbani*.

Professor Sahib Singh in his book ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਵਿਆਕਰਣ has discussed all these intricate points and is followed up by Principal Harbhajan Singh in the book ਜਵਾਬ ਉਲ ਜਵਾਬ - ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਲਿਖਣ ਵਿਧੀ, ਵਿਆਕਰਣ ਅਤੇ ਸ਼ੁੱਧ ਉਚਾਰਣ.

Col Avtar Singh and Dr Gurbakhsh Singh USA, in their letters to the Editor, AOSS, have also touched all such points under the title *Dismemberment of Sri Guru Granth Sahib and Translation of Guru Granth Sahib in English* published in AOSS (vol VII, issue 4) Oct-Dec 2005 and (vol VIII, Issue 4) Oct-Dec 2006 and have aptly observed it as an act of sacrilege and distortion of meaning of *gurbani*. Any change being suggested in the garb of study is non-controversial.

Each one has one's own level of wisdom and expression. As Guru Gobind Singh says :

ਆਪੁ ਆਪਨੀ ਬੁਧਿ ਹੈ ਜੇਤੀ ॥ ਬਰਤਨ ਭਿੰਨ ਭਿੰਨ ਤੁਹਿ ਤੇਤੀ ॥

It is now known that International Sikh Confederation has already decided to undertake the task of the standard English Translation by a team of eminent literary true Sikh scholars which will form the basis for future translations into other languages. I am sure the writer Prof Sarjit Singh should feel scure on this score.

I fail to understand as to how this conflicting and confusing article has been published in a reputed magazine AOSS. Greater editorial effort is needed for selection in future.

Yours sincerely

Inderjit Singh

Assistant Engineer (retd)

# 200, Phase 2, Mohali

~~~

SIKH BODY SOWS SEEDS OF SURVIVAL : EDUCATION*

Excellent effort and we should all chip in and the target is not out of reach to achieve. We need to scrutinize its bye laws thoroughly

that regulate its functioning properly and efficiently. I have great confidence and respect for people like Dr Kharak Singh whom I had a chance to meet some dozen years ago. I sincerely hope that this body remains independent and autonomous for its smooth functioning. I pledge equivalent of Rs 1,00,000 initially and promise to add more as time progresses. I am sure there are many more like me who are willing to contribute towards this noble project.

Respectfully
Sajjan Singh Bhangoo

(* Letter forwarded by S Ishwinder Singh from *learning-zone@yahoogroups.com*)

□

**CONTRIBUTE LIBERALLY FOR THE ISC's BILLION DOLLAR
SIKH EDUCATION FUND**

The decision to create an endowment Fund of a billion dollars for the cause of education of Sikh youth has been widely welcomed. As soon as the resolution was adopted by the ISC Interim Executive Committee, members greeted it with spontaneous contributions which aggregated to nearly a million rupees on the spot. (Names of the contributors: Dr Kharak Singh, Dr G S Kalkat, Principal Gurbax Singh Shergill, Justice Mota Singh QC, S Anup Singh, Lt Gen Kartar Singh Gill, Justice Bakshish Kaur, Lt Col Parminder Singh, Bibi Baljit Kaur, S Ajit Singh Bains, S Sukhdev Singh, Justice S S Grewal, S Pritam Singh Kohli, S Dilawar Singh Dhutt).

We appeal to all Sikhs not to lag behind and contribute liberally for this noble cause, so that the target is achieved sooner than later, and the dream of providing quality education to every aspiring Sikh youth upto the highest level is realised. Besides cash, donations in the form of computers and other educational equipments would also be welcome for use in schools.

— Editor

DEAR READER

EVERYBODY LOVES A GIFT

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ABSTRACTS OF SIKH STUDIES

OBJECTIVES

1. To bring the latest advances in Sikh Studies to the notice of scholars and general readers.
2. To project a correct image of Sikhism and the Sikh Community in India as well as abroad.
3. To watch, report and rebut any distortions or misrepresentations of Sikh Religion and its History.
4. To serve as a living link, and provide coordination among organisations engaged in promotion of Sikh Studies.
5. To highlight problems of Sikh diaspora, and suggest solutions.
6. To arrange reviews of important publications relating to Sikhism.
7. To assist readers in framing an informed opinion on matters relating to Sikhism and Sikh Studies.
8. To give publicity to activities of various Sikh Societies around the world.
9. To act as a forum for expression of readers' views.
10. To advertise appropriate literature on Sikhism.

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(Vol IX, Issue 2)

April-June 2007 / 539 NS

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EDITORIAL

UNITE ON A MINIMUM COMMON PROGRAM

Inevitably, we have entered an era of coalitions. As a result of mounting political awareness, a number of parties have appeared on the scene, each contending for power on the basis of its own program. Their election manifestos vary and often contradict those of others. Very often no single party gets a majority to form a government of its own and to carry out its agenda. This naturally leads to coalition of two or more parties. The present UPA government is a coalition of several parties with widely ranging approach to social, economic and political problems. Its predecessor NDA government was no different in this respect. Several state governments are also run by coalitions. Punjab is lucky. It has only two coalition partners, so that distribution of pelf and power is manageable without much difficulty. The main thing to be noted is that all coalitions survive on a common programme on which all parties must agree, and drop or suspend such items on their agenda, as are not acceptable to other partners. Once this requirement is ignored, the coalition falls. Therefore, sensible parties take care not to cross the line.

Religious leaders can learn a lesson from this experience in the political field. They can also apply the strategy of coalition for achievement of such goals as are common to all, but no single group can achieve alone. While major political parties are not many and could be counted on fingers, the religious groups or parties are innumerable. Apart from the big cartels like the SGPC and the DSGMC with large defined jurisdictions, there are countless *deras* spread over the entire state of Punjab and outside, which enjoy allegiance of the masses in their respective spheres. Some of these like the Sacha Sauda can significantly influence the elections and tilt the balance of power, as demonstrated in the February 2007 Punjab Assembly elections.

Deras also have their jurisdictions where they have followers deeply committed to a *Sant* or the head of the *dera*. We must recognize that *deras* exist, and given the kind of faith our people have in *babas*, we can be quite sure that they are going to stay.

All *deras* profess Sikhism as their faith, and claim that they preach the Gurus' gospel. Not all of them, however, follow the *rahit maryada* as approved by the Panth and notified by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. Drawing largely on *gurbani*, and sometimes even distorting its meaning, however, they preach their own cult, which gives their follower an identity, distinct from others. But they all claim allegiance to the basic concepts of the Sikh religion, and they also realize that they can draw their followers from among the Sikhs only.

It is also a historical fact that, by and large, missionary work in Sikh religion has been done by sects like *Udasis* and *Nirmalas*, at their *deras*, besides some great saints like Sant Attar Singh who converted hundreds of thousands to the Sikh faith. That is to say that the *sants* and their *deras* have the required potential to propagate Sikh religion among the masses. There is thus no reason why this source with enormous potential should be ignored. In fact, this cadre needs to be properly mobilized to carry out a well-planned comprehensive programme or a campaign for revival of the pristine values of Sikhism.

The Panth faces numerous problems. There are serious challenges to its identity. A wave of apostasy is overtaking our younger generation, so that young boys with unshorn hair and turban on their heads have been reduced to a tiny minority. The elders have failed to look after them and to provide suitable role models. In fact, they are themselves falling prey to aggressive missionary programmes of other faiths. Large-scale conversions of Sikh families to Christianity have been reported from rural areas, where, due to ignorance and poverty, people can be easily misled by clever non-Sikh agencies. Christian churches are becoming a common site in Punjab villages. These missionary outfits have a target of a church in every village. It is surprising that our leaders have taken no notice of these serious inroads. Apart from this, there are other problems like widespread drug-addiction and social evils like dowry and lavish spending on marriages, etc., leading to indebtedness, misery and suicides. Lack of quality education and employment opportunities has caused deep frustration among youth. The situation is getting worse day by day. This state of affairs demands serious attention of all well-

wishers of the Panth. A comprehensive all-out effort is necessary to put the Panth back on the rails.

This is a task which cannot be handled single-handedly by any individual or organization. All Panthic organizations and *deras* have to come together and make a united effort. No doubt, these agencies have their own agenda. But following the coalition philosophy, it is possible to evolve a minimum common programme, which would serve the cause of the Panth, and, at the same time, benefit all the individual agencies concerned. For, they know that if Sikhism flourishes, all Sikh organizations will benefit. And, if there are no Sikhs, their establishment will close. Closure and sale of a large number of Christian churches in UK and some other Western countries, for want of devotees, is a living example of this phenomenon. This should serve as a warning. It also stresses the need for intra-faith dialogue, which fortunately is not so difficult among Sikhs, as among followers of other contemporary faiths.

It is necessary, therefore, to convene a conclave of like-minded Sikh organizations to plan a campaign in which they could participate actively to adopt and carry out an MCP (Minimum Common Program) in their areas of influence. Initiative should legitimately come from one or both of the biggest Panthic organizations, the SGPC and DSGMC. Failing that, the Institute of Sikh Studies and the recently organized International Sikh Confederation should take up the challenge.

The MCP can include such items as are acceptable to all. Some of these are:

- A. Campaign against :
 - i. Drug addiction
 - ii. Female foeticide
 - iii. Evils of dowry and other social evils
 - iv. Apostasy
 - v. Attacks on Sikh identity
 - vi. Inroads by other faiths
 - vii. Illiteracy
- B. Divinity teaching in Schools
- C. Training of divinity teachers
- D. Quality Education
- E. TV Channel

- F. Organising special programmes for youth for weaning them away from drugs and other undesirable activities, and to arouse the interest in *gurbani*, gurdwara and games to promote physical and mental health.
- G. Teaching *nit nem* and promoting *sahj path* of Guru Granth Sahi
- H. Job-oriented training courses for youth, both boys and girls.
- I. Organising social service activities based on felt needs of the people in a particular area.

The conclave should lead to constitution of a standing committee for implementation of the programme in a coordinated manner. Also it would be necessary to hold similar conclaves regularly, annually or atleast once in two years.

□

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I, Kharak Singh, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to my knowledge and belief.

Chandigarh: Dated, 1st April, 2007

Sd/ Kharak Singh
Signature of Publisher

NAM AND SIMRIN*

PURAN SINGH

As 'Guru Prasad' is a whole phenomenon with the Guru, so Nam and Simrin in the Guru's house are laws of being. The embodied God is a name and form. Nothing can be without Him. Word is also form. Sound too is of the Form.

These words – Nam and Simrin – are the corner – stone of the gospel of the *Bhaktas* of medieval India. If the words mean exactly what they mean to them, then Sikhism, in this respect, would turn out to be nothing but a kind of mystic reverie which, in its ecstasy, seeks absorption into the Infinite, as a peace that shuts itself up and shrivels up evidently in all ordinary practice to a mere dead concept of – *all is one*. It would mean a modification of the doctrines of Yoga which are condemned by all the Guru with great vehemence. The Nam mutterers roam by the thousand in yellow robes on the banks of the Jumna and Ganga even now to no purpose. Such peace ceases to be creative. Creativeness being the only critical test which differentiates living peace from dead peace, the Gurus did not mean by Nam and Simrin what these would signify in Brahminism. With the Guru Nam and Simrin is assuredly no attempt to die in the formless unknown Infinite, but is the peopling of the void with a thousand forms. It is living in a paradise of Beauties that subsist in name and form, by the Name.

"Whose Name"? "Simrin" – Remembrance of what? The *Japa* of *Pranava* or the repetition of OM as in the Upanishads has been the process of *Simrin*. The ancient *Simrin* has been the applied form of the Brahminical philosophy of the Absolute, and its end was a mental abstraction which ended in a so-called *Brahmgyani* on whom all the opposites had lost their effects and who was not embodied in action,

* Courtesy : *Spirit of the Sikhs*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1981, pp 66-76

an embodiment of uncreative peace of being. The springs of all action, thought and feelings, were allowed to get rusted and a state of bliss was reached which looked at life in a dazed way. This led the Hindu to look at his navel, expecting the whole universe to spring from there. It has not yet sprung. Thousands of names for God have been invented by the Hindus. And the process was in full activity before and after Guru Nanak. It had sunk deep into all the theological expositions of the Brahminical lore, that the mere muttering of names brings merit. The indolent people, having had no strength left in them for noble action, took to reciting names and called this meaningless muttering the end of all religious effort. In a few well-directed cases it might have led to the development of some concentration, but as the whole process was alloyed with fundamental spiritual inanity, the results so far have been throughout wholly disastrous. Bhai Guru Das traces the kindship of ages upto the Sikh period of the true process of Nam and *Simrin*, but he says that its full development and true significance came with Guru Nanak. In different ages only the few attained to the intensive spirituality of Nam. Nam is inspiration, not a mechanical sadhana, or effort to be what one cannot be without inspiration. Yoga and its process may yield some strange accomplishment, but accomplishments, however, extraordinary, do not belong to the essential beauty of the soul.

It goes without saying that Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru, should most of all, understand the message of Guru Nanak. If anyone could rightly interpret the language of Guru Granth, it was he. And undeniably so, because it was he, who after what interpretation of it he gave to the disciples called upon the latter to worship Guru Granth as his successor. He enthroned the Word, he crowned the song of the Guru as the King Eternal of the Khalsa. There is a soul in the great anthems of man, and the song of the, Guru is he himself speaking to us, disciples, from a myriad throats. *Simrin* is more or less a spiritual planetary system of divine remembrance and inspiration. Jesus Christ cannot die, nor Mary, nor Mary Magdalene. They are living much more than they could live here. To feel that those spiritual words of theirs are at our back, they watch us, and to have a spontaneous memory of them as we have of absent friends and relatives is Nam and *Simrin*, in the spiritual sense, in which Guru Nanak uses these words. To

have the consciousness of the Heavens at our back is to live in Nam.

In these dark regions of the spirit-world live all the desire-bound beings, who do not let man go safe beyond. In these dark regions are the slums of those who have violated their purity. Here is man, self-fettered by his own violent deeds which have been suicidal to him in as much as they created a "curvature" in his soul, and he cannot be freed even after physical death. Unless he has by luck been introduced to the higher regions of absolute freedom, man rots in his own desires for centuries, in his own violent crimes, in his own filth and mire of sin that sticks to him even beyond death. A Sikh saint of *Simrin* (whom I have seen) told us one day that there are souls that by their own heaviness sink into the earth; others live on its surface. Very few rise up and they are caught by, their earthly relatives who died before them—mothers and fathers and uncles and grandfathers. Then there are men-gurus, the mental hypnotists and charlatans who crushed men here by their mental power. Many a soul like that of "Lilith" flutters like birds caught in the noose of someone's mental powers. Many souls are I rotting in the eternal prisons of unilluminated dungeons of the minds of those occults, divines, those who passed as great saviours of men, by the excitement of their intellect here on earth. Both masters and disciples are fettered to each other. And there are innumerable soul-worlds where many such live. The Yogis who make on earth tremendous efforts to be something : extraordinary, live eternal in their own little cocoons.

They have no peace, they have no power. After death, they come to know that their best religions and best efforts were their undoing. They become prisoners of the ego.

Higher, still higher; far, far away (to use this relative language of ours) are the regions of freedom where the Guru lives, where the Ten Gurus as Ten solar systems still shine. And men who love them as their personal friends, as fathers, as guides, as gods, whatever the subjective relation one might find suitable for self-culture, provided the feeling is real and sincere, are but earning themselves a passage to that great kingdom of freedom-love, joy and song after death, aye before death. This spontaneous relationship with the great is Nam and *Simrin* of the Guru; it is inspiration of attachment to those stars. With a similar madness and inspiration as came once to the dreamy,

The Maid of Orleans who actually heard voices of angles, without the spiritual gift of the prophet Muhammad, without the visionary poetic sensibility of Dante, without the intensity of an Hanuman or a Prahalad, without the majesty and glory of a Chaitanya's emotion for Krishna, with which he throwaway the idol of Krishna from the Hindu sanctuary and sat himself in the place of the stone-idol; without the devotion of a St. Theresa and without the full resolution to charge and scale the higher heights with the will of Napoleon, it is idle to think of the cosmic process of Nam and *Simrin* of Guru Nanak. It is unimaginable by uninspired beings. It cannot be a wearisome superstition to the uninitiated. Without this cosmic Guru-parshad religion, in spite of centuries of practice is tyranny.

Here is how Guru Gobind Singh interprets Guru Nanak in living words of clashing steel, shining sabres, and in the elevated fearless accents of the Universal dissolution of all that had gone before. Guru Gobind Singh starts a new world, a new Earth, a new Sky in his great epics. He wants the lightning to speak for him, the thunder to give his message, the floods of his soul to destroy all and to create again and afresh the natural manhood and equally supernatural natural Godhood of man.

Now there must be nothing in Guru Granth which should contradict this spirit of the Tenth Guru. And if the traditional meaning of words as the learned scholars both Hindu and Sikh, gave them is given, there is hardly what brings out this spirit. To bring in archaic, dead, non-creative Sanskrit philosophy and Brahminical mythology and all the cock and bull stories as to how the universe was made, what is God, what is the beginning and end of this world, is assuredly to go against the undefinable spirit of music that sublimates life out of dead matter, the music which pervades the Guru's Song. The music of that Great Symphony of this Guru cannot be philosophized over in any particular manner.

Thus the Guru's "Nam" is the supernaturally natural function of a poetical genius who though in body, is at all times of day and night under the influence of the higher. Soul-worlds of Freedom. It is a state of mind akin to the rapturous state of Swedenborg; it is a state of mind which came to the prophet Muhammad, it is that remembrance in which Christ remembered the "Father in Heaven" in the Son of

Man. It is the state, omniscient state of a Prophet's consciousness. It is the pure subjectivity of love-bursting up under the sole and invisible spiritual guidance from below the crusts of earthiness, from under the hard conditions of earthly life. The Sikh Saint of *Simrin* feels he is continuously and inwardly raised above the gross worlds of filth and dirt and desire and self, and he feels as light as if he had no body. The physical efforts of this state of mind are marvellous. He finds in himself, in his head above his forehead, a pool of nectar-his eyes are always pulled upward by this *continuous inebriation*. His inner and true religion is this continuous inebriation; this is His Nam and Simrin. The breezes of Heaven keep gently blowing on that inner Amritsar of his. He is perfectly healthy when this magnetic attraction is on, but if anything happens to upset this balance, he loses power. When he is in this self-centre where so to say the souls of the Regions of spiritual Freedom fill him with Grace, his wishes are kinetic. He can best do good to man from there. He can always do more from there than by running out of his centre and rendering physical help or mental sympathy. His altruism is of the spirit. Those who are of broken spirits, those who with all mental and physical self-expansion are despondent, are made whole by his wishes they become radiant with faith. All poets who have been so gloriously pessimistic were mental giants. They were sublimed Excitements, they had not yet realised the soul, the Nam, to which realization Guru Nanak points, without which he says life is but a process of burning.

Mere children who are happy and innocent are greater than the poets of the earth in "spirituality" of the guru's Grace. "His devotees are in unbroken bliss" (Japuji). Ask such a one. He would not discourse on the why and wherefore, but would just reply, "I live in a state of life which is indescribable and when I live there, I feel I am in perennial contact with a world I cannot describe, and in this stream like contact I feel I am alive. Once broken from there, I feel I am dead". And he would "tell you that "It cannot be taught, it cannot be described." Those whom "HE" favours, the lucky ones, get it. This is the message of Guru Granth. The discipleship is wholly of soul-consciousness. Nam and *Simrin* thus is this spontaneous condition of self-consciousness fully concentrated in the silvery stream of inspiration that united him with those masters who become his body and mind.

He feels helpless, all is as He wills. The continuousness of his inspiration from on high takes this final form of love on earth. Spiritual character of man is the mere effect of this inflow of inspiration. It is as spontaneous and creative a surrender as of woman to man. And it has its levels of rise and fall. All living inspiration must rise and fall. Sometimes it is an undetermined melting away, melting away into the infinite. Sometimes it is as adamant as granite rocks, sometimes as bright as the sword flashing and destroying darkness. The dull academic unity of all things does not interest him; it matters little to a living man, whether the ultimate reality is one or many. The man of Nam and Simrin does not concern Himself with metaphysical speculation. He thinks his brief life is cut still shorter by idle mental abstractions. This occasion of life is for learning the divine music of life; it means hard labour, it means some kind of artistic perfection.

Nam and *Simrin* thus become in the Guru's system, an effect of inspiration, not a speculation but a realistic attitude, towards the freedom of soul that one can find partly here, but wholly only in the life after death, realms where the Ten Gurus, their apostles and disciples now live. It presupposes other worlds of freed life than ours which in unspatial space are right here with us. It establishes living relationships with the mighty saviours that live in that shining Unseen space and time, the Akal. It suggests a certain process of selection and sublimation at work in the swing of souls. We find the Guru saying that Nam is the Favour of God. "Some get it while fast asleep. He Himself comes, awakens them and puts the Holy Cup of Nectar to their lips, while others (who suppose themselves fully conscious of this scheme often get it not." Hence the Guru says the Gurmukh is one whose mouth is open for the reception of the nectar of the Guru.

This personality of the "Logos" embodied in flesh form is like the material yet immaterial magneto-electric point. It is the nucleus round which the play of creative processes goes on, like those in atoms and solar systems. One sees clearly in the biographies of all the Ten Gurus, that as men they themselves moved and behaved as disciples. They themselves revered the spirit of the Guru in individual, in groups of men, in song and in word. This is unique.

Like Buddhism, Sikhism is an art of living so that everyone might

THE MESSAGE OF GURU GRANTH SAHIB

KHARAK SINGH

To sum up the message of Guru Granth Sahib is an impossible task. It is a unique religious scripture, which embodies not only the revolutionary thought process initiated by Guru Nanak and followed by his successor Gurus, but also the wisdom bequeathed by outstanding Indian sages of the previous five centuries, coming from different schools of spiritual thought. The *Gurbani*, as the divine message in the Granth, is called, deals with every conceivable aspect of human life, temporal as well as spiritual, and envisages a comprehensive whole-life religious system called Sikhism. It is the youngest among scriptures of the major world religions. Coupled with the facts that it is authenticated by the Guru himself and that it enjoys the status of Guru Eternal of the Sikhs, it becomes a unique scripture.

A number of serious studies on Guru Granth Sahib were made by scholars during the last two centuries. We have recently celebrated the fourth centenary of its compilation, that fell in 2004, and we are looking forward to the third centenary of its anointment as Guru Eternal of the Sikhs, falling in 2008. In the wake of these celebrations, a large number of seminars have been organized in India as well as abroad, attracting hundreds of papers dealing with different aspects of the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib or its contents.

Guru Arjun Dev who compiled this great scripture, himself gave an indication as to its contents in the epilogue as follows:

*"In this salver are lying three viands —
truth, content and contemplation.
Also lying in it is the Lord's ambrosial
Name, sustenance of all existence.
Whoever, partakes of it, consumes it,*

saved shall be.
This substance no way can be discarded —
ever in heart cherish it.
The world, darkness enveloped, by touch of
the Master's feet, is crossed
Thus, sayeth Nanak, all that is visible,
is seen as manifestation of the Supreme Being.”¹

The Guru compares the Granth with a salver containing spiritual foods, carrying viands of *Sat* (Truth), *Santokh* (contentment) and *Vichar* (contemplation), besides *Naam* (the immanent Lord). These constitute the major components of the Gurus' message, and are, therefore, briefly discussed below :

TRUTH (ਸਤਿ)

Sat is a Sanskrit word, which literally means a reality or something that exists. According to Guru Granth Sahib, the ultimate reality is God Himself. He was in the beginning; He was, when the *yugas* started; He is now; and ever He shall be.²

According to earlier religious traditions in India, the world was considered *mithya* or *maya*, which in fact did not exist, and all we see is an illusion. Guru Granth Sahib rejects this view, and says that the universe is God's creation, and is, therefore, real.³ “It is the abode of the True Lord. He dwells in it”⁴, and that it has been created as a place to practise *dharmā*⁵ in the midst of air, water, fire and nether regions. He, however, makes a distinction between God and the universe. While the former is the Creator, eternal without beginning or end, the latter is His creation which is transient, ever changing, becoming, and subject to beginning and end in time under His Will.

According to Guru Granth Sahib, it is not enough to know or understand Truth. It must be practised in life, as stressed in the following verses :

“Realization of Truth is higher than all else —
higher still is truthful living.”⁶

The Guru elaborates truthful living :

— *“Ever do they see and speak truth:*

Thus are their body and mind rendered holy.

Their teaching, their preaching is truth;

- Through truth comes to them noble repute.
Those disregarding truth depart this life wailing and crying.*"⁷
- *"He, who is true here, is true hereafter too;
The true mind is imbued with the True word;
He, who serves the Truth, practises the (Lord's) Truth,
And earns he nothing but the Truth,
Sacrifice, O Sacrifice am I unto those,
Who enshrine the True Name in their hearts,
And serve the True One and merge in Him,
And sing the praises of the True One."*⁸
- *"True should be known such a one as in heart bears truth —
His impurity of falsehood cast off,
His person should be washed clean.
True should be known such a one as to truth is devoted in love.
Should a person on listening to the Name Divine feels joyful,
The Door of liberation he attains.
True should be known such a one as knows the device of
union of the self with the Absolute.
Preparing soil of his body, the Creator in it should he sow.
True should be known such a one as truthful instruction receives;
Should be compassionate to creation and something in
charity give away.
True should be known such a one as at the bathing-spot
of the self takes abode;
Seeks the holy Preceptor's guidance and takes his fixed
abode there.
Truth is the universal remedy, washing off evils.
Nanak lays his supplication before such as to Truth
bold on."*⁹
- *"Speak ever what is truthful and pure; shun what is false
Let the disciple tread the path shown by the Master."*¹⁰
- *"To bear Truth in heart is purest doing.
All else is fraud, whose worship ignominy entails."*¹¹

The Guru adds that truth must be spoken, when the occasion demands.¹² One should not shirk this responsibility. Falsehood is decried and compared to eating a carrion.¹³

CONTENTMENT (ਸੰਤੋਖ)

Santokh means a state of being satisfied with what God in His grace, gives us. It is the opposite of greed or covetousness, which is decried in the Guru Granth Sahib as one of the five major vices that afflict humans.

Lured by temptation, people run after wealth and objects of worldly pleasure. These, however, do not quench one's thirst. The endless struggle for acquisition of more and more wealth continues. In the following verses the Guru explains the futility of these pursuits and the need for *santokh* for ultimate peace of mind:

*"Maya of many hues in numerous aspects have I seen;
I have seen much wisdom too by pen on paper recorded.
Status of chief, king and lord too have I beheld;
None of these to the mind brings fulfillment. (1)
Holy devotees ! tell me of that joy,
Whereby may desire be annulled and the mind's hunger be
satisfied. (Pause I)*

*Riding steeds fast as wind and elephants;
Fragrance of attar and sandalwood; couching
with beauteous females;
Musical and dramatic performance in theatre —
In none of these does the mind find satisfaction. (2)
In splendid assemblies to sit on thrones with
carpets spread;*

*Enjoying gardens with all manner of fruits laden;
The spectacle of chase by kings;
None of these to the mind brings joy:
All false shows appear. (3)*

*The holy in their grace have declared this truth,
Wherein lie all joy and bliss:
In holy company chant Divine praise !
Saith Nanak : This by great good fortune is attained. (4)
Happy is one having such Divine wealth.
By Divine grace is found union with the holy."*¹⁴

There are numerous references to *santokh* in Guru Granth Sahib. We may reproduce one of these to conclude that craving will not end

without *santokh*.

Man earning thousands, in pursuit after millions goes —
 By accumulation of wealth not satisfied, runs after these.
 Should man enjoy innumerable poison-delights,
 He still is unsatisfied, and after these dies hankering.
 In contentment alone lies satisfaction —
 All other actions are worthless as resolves and actions in dream.
 By devotion to the Name come all joys —
 This state by rare ones by great good fortune is attained.
 The Lord is the sole Doer of all.
 Saith Nanak : Ever the Lord's Name thou utter.¹⁵

In *Japu ji* Guru Nanak explains that the traditional bull believed to support the world, is, in fact, *dharma* (the practice of righteous deeds), which leads to *santokh*.¹⁶

CONTEMPLATION (ਵੀਚਾਰੋ)

The term has been variously translated by scholars as 'wisdom', 'contemplation', or 'meditation'. It also means thought or view. In any case, it involves the use of intellect and concentration. The Guru gives his own views on practically every subject dealing with life. For example, in the *Japu ji* he gives a beautiful description of Nature. He mentions all the good as well as bad things, and concludes, sharing his wisdom:

"How may I contemplate and express His might,
 I that am unworthy even once to be made a sacrifice to Him!
 Whatever Thou wilt is good,
 Thou Formless one!
 Immutable, ever-perfect art Thou."¹⁷

The Guru, however, does not favour blind faith. He advocates use of brain or intellectual faculties, to see the merit of one's actions and to discriminate between good and evil :

"By wisdom is the Lord served, by wisdom is attained honour,
 By wisdom are books interpreted,
 By wisdom is dispensed charity,
 Saith Nanak : There is one sole path to God.
 All else is Satan's prompting."¹⁸

He warns, however, that intellect should not be wasted in needless

controversies:

- *"Those without truth and modesty in the hereafter
honoured shall not be.
To indulge in disputation is to lose sense —
Such is not the way of wisdom."*¹⁹
- *"...In the remaining seven quarters must one love truth,
practise goodness,
And seek company of the enlightened.
Therein is discriminated good from evil;
The false are found losers;
The spurious are cast off;
The genuine given approbation.
Saith Nanak : Suffering and happiness from the Lord comes;
All argument is of no avail."*²⁰

The Guru commends learning, since "it induces in the mind service of mankind."²¹ The Guru decries ignorance. He says :

*"If the night be black, what is white shall so remain;
In the blazing light of the day, the black remains black;
Those blind of sight, ignorant, without enlightenment,
Who see not, shall nowise be honoured in the Court Divine."*²²

Wisdom or learning should be used in practical life. Knowledge for its own sake alone does not do any good. Kabir says :

*"Saith Kabir : The mind aware of everywhere, yet does evil.
What weal when holding lamp in hand, still into the well falls."*²³

The Guru adds that learning should be used for a noble purpose, and condemns its use for betraying one's own people :

*"Deer, falcons and state officials are given training
That in snares spread around,
Their fellows they get entangled —
In the hereafter shall they find no rest.
Such are truly learned, well-taught and wise,
As live in accordance with holy piety.
Only that which has roots to grow from,
Can cast a shade from above."*²⁴

NAAM (ਨਾਮ)

"Concept of *Naam* is fundamental to the gospel of Guru Granth

Sahib and the entire structure of its theology. In fact, Sikhism has often been called *Naam Maarga*, or the way of *Naam*.²⁵ The word *Naam*, as used in Guru Granth Sahib, has a distinct and more significant meaning than that of mere name. Often it has been used as synonymous with God. *Naam* is unfathomable. According to *Gurbani*, "It sustains all regions and universes, all thought, knowledge and consciousness, all skies and stars, all forces and substances, all continents and spheres. *Naam* emancipates those who accept it in their heart. He, on whom is His Grace, is yoked to *Naam*, and he reaches the highest state of development. *Naam* permeates the entire creation. There is no place or space where *Naam* is not."²⁶

In *Asa di Vaar*²⁷, the Guru says that God created Himself (*nirgun* or formless) and himself created *Naam* (the *Sargun sarup*). Later He created the universe, and permeated it in immanent form. For practical purposes, we may, therefore, assume *Naam* as God Himself in the immanent form.

The subject of *Naam* is too vast to be discussed in the limited scope of this paper. It must be stated, however, that all Sikhs are seekers of *Naam* which is regarded as the greatest gift. They pray :

"Lord, to seek other than You is the greatest of afflictions.

Confer on me the Naam, the bringer of content,

*Wherewith the mind's thirst may go."*²⁸

It is necessary to understand what the gift of *Naam* means. It certainly does not mean merger with God. For, God is the Creator, and man is His creation. So gift of *Naam* means link with God or His Will which is also synonymous with *Naam*. He prays :

"O that someone to the Lord were to unite me!

Of such a one shall I grasp the feet,

Utter him fine words,

*Dedicate life to him."*²⁹

The purpose is to identify His Will and to become an agent or instrument in the execution of the benevolent Will of God. That is the goal of life.

CONCLUSION

As pointed out in the beginning of this paper, it is impossible to sum up the comprehensive message of Guru Granth Sahib. Guru

Arjun Dev has, however, compared it with a salver of spiritual food which contains, *inter alia*, three viands, viz., Truth, Contentment and Wisdom, besides *Naam*. God is the ultimate Truth. The universe is His creation, and is, therefore, also real and not an illusion. It is not enough to realize the truth. It should be practised in life. Greed or the unending craving for worldly possessions and pleasures, is decried, since ultimate peace is attainable only through contentment. The Guru also stresses the need for contemplation and wisdom in order to discriminate good from evil, for in the ultimate evaluation only good deeds lead to deliverance. The aim of life is link with *Naam* or the immanent God, to recognize His Will, and to be an instrument in its execution. Lastly, we should not forget the message that *Sabad* is the real guru, and there is no place for a personal guru in corporal form in the Sikh religious thought. It must also be noted that the message of the Guru is universal, and addresses the entire mankind, and not Sikhs alone or any other particular community.

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- 6 Ibid., p. 62 : ਸਚੁ ਓਰੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੇ ਉਪਰਿ ਸਚੁ ਆਚਾਰੁ ॥ ੫ ॥
- 7 Ibid., p. 69 : ਸਚੁ ਵੇਖਣੁ ਸਚੁ ਬੋਲਣਾ ਤਨੁ ਮਨੁ ਸਚਾ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਸਚੀ ਸਾਖੀ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਸਚੁ ਸਚੈ ਸਚੀ ਸੋਇ ॥ ਜਿੰਨੀ ਸਚੁ ਵਿਸਾਰਿਆ ਸੇ ਦੁਖੀਏ ਚਲੇ ਰੋਇ ॥ ੪ ॥
- 8 Ibid., p. 116 : ਐਬੈ ਸਾਚੇ ਸੁ ਆਗੈ ਸਾਚੇ ॥ ਮਨੁ ਸਚਾ ਸਚੈ ਸਬਦਿ ਰਾਚੇ ॥ ਸਚਾ ਸੇਵਹਿ ਸਚੁ ਕਮਾਵਹਿ ਸਚੈ ਸਚੁ ਕਮਾਵਣਿਆ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਹਉ ਵਾਰੀ ਜੀਉ ਵਾਰੀ ਸਚਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਮੰਨਿ ਵਸਾਵਣਿਆ ॥ ਸਚੈ ਸੇਵਹਿ ਸਚਿ ਸਮਾਵਹਿ ਸਚੈ ਕੇ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਵਣਿਆ ॥ ੧ ॥
- 9 Ibid., p. 468 : ਸਚੁ ਤਾ ਪਰੁ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਜਾ ਰਿਦੈ ਸਚਾ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਕੂੜ ਕੀ ਮਲੁ ਉਤਰੈ ਤਨੁ ਕਰੇ ਹਛਾ ਪੋਇ ॥ ਸਚੁ ਤਾ ਪਰੁ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਜਾ ਸਚਿ ਧਰੇ ਪਿਆਰੁ ॥ ਨਾਉ ਸੁਣਿ ਮਨੁ ਰਹਸੀਐ ਤਾ

- ਪਾਏ ਮੋਖ ਦੁਆਰੁ ॥ ਸਚੁ ਤਾ ਪਰੁ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਜਾ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਜਾਣੈ ਜੀਉ ॥ ਧਰਤਿ ਕਾਇਆ ਸਾਧ ਹੈ
ਵਿਚਿ ਦੇਇ ਕਰਤਾ ਬੀਉ ॥ ਸਚੁ ਤਾ ਪਰੁ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਜਾ ਸਿਖ ਸਚੀ ਲੇਇ ॥ ਦਇਆ ਜਾਣੈ ਜੀਅ
ਕੀ ਕਿਛੁ ਪੁੰਨੁ ਦਾਨੁ ਕਰੇਇ ॥ ਸਚੁ ਤਾ ਪਰੁ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਜਾ ਆਤਮ ਤੀਰਥਿ ਕਰੇ ਨਿਵਾਸੁ ॥
ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਨੋ ਪੁਛਿ ਕੈ ਬਹਿ ਰਹੈ ਕਰੇ ਨਿਵਾਸੁ ॥ ਸਚੁ ਸਭਨਾ ਹੋਇ ਦਾਰੁ ਪਾਪੁ ਕਵੈ ਧੋਇ ॥
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਵਖਾਣੈ ਬੇਨਤੀ ਜਿਨ ਸਚੁ ਪਲੈ ਹੋਇ ॥ ੨ ॥
- 10 Ibid., p. 488 : ਬੋਲੀਐ ਸਚੁ ਧਰਮੁ ਝੂਠੁ ਨ ਬੋਲੀਐ ॥ ਜੇ ਗੁਰੁ ਦਸੈ ਵਾਟ ਮੁਰੀਦਾ ਜੋਲੀਐ
॥ ੩ ॥
- 11 Ibid., p. 1343 : ਹਿਰਦੈ ਸਚੁ ਏਹ ਕਰਣੀ ਸਾਰੁ ॥ ਹੋਰੁ ਸਭੁ ਪਾਖੰਡੁ ਪੂਜ ਖੁਆਰੁ ॥ ੬ ॥
- 12 Ibid., p. 722 : ਸਚ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਆਖੈ ਸਚੁ ਸੁਣਾਇਸੀ ਸਚ ਕੀ ਬੋਲਾ ॥
- 13 Ibid., p. 139 : ਕੂੜੁ ਬੋਲਿ ਮੁਰਦਾਰੁ ਖਾਇ ॥
- 14 Ibid., p. 179 : ਬਹੁ ਰੰਗ ਮਾਇਆ ਬਹੁ ਬਿਧਿ ਪੇਖੀ ॥ ਕਲਮ ਕਾਗਦ ਸਿਆਨਪ ਲੇਖੀ ॥ ਮਹਰਾ
ਮਲੂਕ ਹੋਇ ਦੇਖਿਆ ਖਾਨ ॥ ਤਾ ਤੇ ਨਾਹੀ ਮਨੁ ਤ੍ਰਿਪਤਾਨ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਸੇ ਸੁਖੁ ਮੇ ਕਉ ਸੰਤ ਬਤਾਵਹੁ
॥ ਤ੍ਰਿਸਨਾ ਬੂਝੈ ਮਨੁ ਤ੍ਰਿਪਤਾਵਹੁ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਅਸੁ ਪਵਨ ਹਸਤਿ ਅਸਵਾਰੀ ॥ ਚੋਆ ਚੰਦਨੁ
ਸੇਜ ਸੁੰਦਰਿ ਨਾਰੀ ॥ ਨਟ ਨਾਟਿਕ ਆਖਾਰੇ ਗਾਇਆ ॥ ਤਾ ਮਹਿ ਮਨਿ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਨ ਪਾਇਆ
॥ ੨ ॥ ਤਖਤੁ ਸਭਾ ਮੰਡਨ ਦੇਲੀਚੇ ॥ ਸਗਲ ਮੇਵੇ ਸੁੰਦਰ ਬਾਗੀਚੇ ॥ ਆਖੇਤ ਬਿਰਤਿ ਰਾਜਨ ਕੀ
ਲੀਲਾ ॥ ਮਨੁ ਨ ਸੁਹੇਲਾ ਪਰਪੰਚੁ ਹੀਲਾ ॥ ੩ ॥ ਕਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਸੰਤਨ ਸਚੁ ਕਹਿਆ ॥ ਸਰਬ
ਸੂਖ ਇਹੁ ਆਨੰਦੁ ਲਹਿਆ ॥ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਿ ਹਰਿ ਕੀਰਤਨੁ ਗਾਈਐ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਵਡਭਾਗੀ
ਪਾਈਐ ॥ ੪ ॥ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਹਰਿ ਧਨੁ ਸੋਈ ਸੁਹੇਲਾ ॥ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਤੇ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਿ ਮੇਲਾ ॥ ੧ ॥
ਰਹਾਉ ਦੁਜਾ ॥ ੧੨ ॥ ੮੧ ॥
- 15 Ibid., pp. 278-79 : ਸਹਸ ਖਟੇ ਲਖ ਕਉ ਉਠਿ ਧਾਵੈ ॥ ਤ੍ਰਿਪਤਿ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਮਾਇਆ ਪਾਛੈ
ਪਾਵੈ ॥ ਅਨਿਕ ਭੋਗ ਬਿਖਿਆ ਕੇ ਕਰੈ ॥ ਨਹ ਤ੍ਰਿਪਤਾਵੈ ਖਪਿ ਖਪਿ ਮਰੈ ॥ ਬਿਨਾ ਸੰਤੋਖ ਨਹੀ
ਕੋਊ ਰਾਜੈ ॥ ਸੁਪਨ ਮਨੋਰਥ ਬ੍ਰਿਥੇ ਸਭ ਕਾਜੈ ॥ ਨਾਮ ਰੰਗਿ ਸਰਬ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਬਡਭਾਗੀ ਕਿਸੈ
ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਕਰਨ ਕਰਾਵਨ ਆਪੇ ਆਪਿ ॥ ਸਦਾ ਸਦਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਹਰਿ ਜਾਪਿ ॥ ੫ ॥
- 16 Ibid., p. 3 : ਧੌਲੁ ਧਰਮੁ ਦਇਆ ਕਾ ਪੂਤੁ ॥ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਥਾਪਿ ਰਖਿਆ ਜਿਨਿ ਸੂਤਿ ॥
- 17 Ibid., p. 3 or 4 : ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕਵਣ ਕਹਾ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥ ਵਾਰਿਆ ਨ ਜਾਵਾ ਏਕ ਵਾਰ ॥ ਜੇ
ਤੁਹੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਸਾਈ ਭਲੀ ਕਾਰ ॥ ਤੂ ਸਦਾ ਸਲਾਮਤਿ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ॥ ੧੬ ॥
- 18 Ibid., p. 1245 : ਅਕਲੀ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਸੇਵੀਐ ਅਕਲੀ ਪਾਈਐ ਮਾਨੁ ॥ ਅਕਲੀ ਪਤ੍ਰਿ ਕੈ ਬੁਝੀਐ
ਅਕਲੀ ਕੀਚੈ ਦਾਨੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਆਖੈ ਰਾਹੁ ਏਹੁ ਹੋਰਿ ਗਲਾਂ ਸੈਤਾਨੁ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਮਃ ੨ ॥
- 19 Ibid., p. 1245 : ਸਚੈ ਸਰਮੈ ਬਾਹਰੇ ਅਗੈ ਲਹਹਿ ਨ ਦਾਦਿ ॥ ਅਕਲਿ ਏਹੁ ਨ ਆਖੀਐ
ਅਕਲਿ ਗਵਾਈਐ ਬਾਦਿ ॥
- 20 Ibid., p. 146 : ਸਤੀ ਪਹਰੀ ਸਤੁ ਭਲਾ ਬਹੀਐ ਪਤ੍ਰਿਆ ਪਾਸਿ ॥ ਓਥੇ ਪਾਪੁ ਪੁੰਨੁ
ਬੀਚਾਰੀਐ ਕੂੜੈ ਘਟੈ ਰਾਸਿ ॥ ਓਥੇ ਖੋਟੇ ਸਟੀਅਹਿ ਖਰੇ ਕੀਚਹਿ ਸਾਬਾਸਿ ॥ ਬੋਲਣੁ ਫਾਦਲੁ
ਨਾਨਕਾ ਦੁਖੁ ਸੁਖੁ ਖਸਮੈ ਪਾਸਿ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਮਃ ੨ ॥
- 21 Ibid., p. 356 : ਵਿਦਿਆ ਵੀਚਾਰੀ ਤਾਂ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀ ॥
- 22 Ibid., p. 789 : ਰਾਤੀ ਹੋਵਨਿ ਕਾਲੀਆ ਸੁਪੇਦਾ ਸੇ ਵੰਨ ॥ ਦਿਹੁ ਬਗਾ ਤਪੈ ਘਣਾ ਕਾਲਿਆ
ਕਾਲੇ ਵੰਨ ॥ ਅੰਧੇ ਅਕਲੀ ਬਾਹਰੇ ਮੂਰਖ ਅੰਧ ਗਿਆਨੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਦਰੀ ਬਾਹਰੇ ਕਬਹਿ ਨ
ਪਾਵਹਿ ਮਾਨੁ ॥ ੨ ॥
- 23 Ibid., p. 1376 : ਕਬੀਰ ਮਨੁ ਜਾਨੈ ਸਭ ਬਾਤ ਜਾਨਤ ਹੀ ਅਉਗਨੁ ਕਰੈ ॥ ਕਾਹੇ ਕੀ

- ਕੁਸਲਾਤ ਹਾਥਿ ਦੀਪੁ ਕੂਏ ਪਰੈ ॥
- 24 Ibid., p. 1288 : ਹਰਣਾਂ ਬਾਜਾਂ ਤੈ ਸਿਕਦਾਰਾਂ ਏਨ੍ਹਾ ਪੜਿਆ ਨਾਉ ॥ ਫਾਂਧੀ ਲਗੀ ਜਾਤਿ
ਫਹਾਇਨਿ ਅਗੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਥਾਉ ॥ ਸੋ ਪੜਿਆ ਸੋ ਪੰਡਿਤੁ ਬੀਨਾ ਜਿਨ੍ਹੀ ਕਮਾਣਾ ਨਾਉ ॥ ਪਹਿਲੇ
ਦੇ ਜੜ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਜੰਮੇ ਤਾ ਉਪਰਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਛਾਉ ॥
- 25 Daljeet Singh, *Essentials of Sikhism*, Singh Bros., Amritsar, p.34.
- 26 Ibid., p. 35.
- 27 Guru Granth Sahib, p. 463 : ਆਪੀਨੈ ਆਪੁ ਸਾਜਿਓ ਆਪੀਨੈ ਰਚਿਓ ਨਾਉ ॥ ਦੁਯੀ
ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਸਾਜੀਐ ਕਰਿ ਆਸਣੁ ਡਿਠੇ ਚਾਉ ॥
- 28 Ibid., p. 958 : ਵਿਣੁ ਤੁਧੁ ਹੋਰੁ ਜਿ ਮੰਗਣਾ ਸਿਰਿ ਦੁਖਾ ਕੈ ਦੁਖ ॥ ਦੇਹਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੀਆ ਉਤਰੈ
ਮਨ ਕੀ ਭੁਖ ॥
- 29 Ibid., p. 701 : ਕੋਈ ਜਨੁ ਹਰਿ ਸਿਉ ਦੇਵੈ ਜੋਰਿ ॥ ਚਰਨ ਗਹਉ ਬਕਉ ਸੁਭ ਰਸਨਾ ਦੀਜਹਿ
ਪ੍ਰਾਨ ਅਕੋਰਿ ॥



*All belief in sutak (i.e., impurity contracted by touch) is illusion
That induces worship of someone other than God.
Birth and death occur by Divine Ordinance
And all beings come and go by Divine Will.
All food and drink are pure:
For, God Himself has granted these for our sustenance.
They who realize this truth by the Guru's guidance,
Are not affected by this sort of impurity.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p. 472

ਸਭੇ ਸੂਤਕੁ ਭਰਮੁ ਹੈ ਦੂਜੈ ਲਗੈ ਜਾਇ ॥
ਜੰਮਣੁ ਮਰਣਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੈ ਭਾਣੈ ਆਵੈ ਜਾਇ ॥
ਖਾਣਾ ਪੀਣਾ ਪਵਿਤ੍ਰੁ ਹੈ ਦਿਤੋਨੁ ਰਿਜਕੁ ਸੰਬਾਹਿ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਨ੍ਹੀ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਬੁਝਿਆ ਤਿਨ੍ਹਾ ਸੂਤਕੁ ਨਾਹਿ ॥

THE PERENNIAL VALUE OF BHAKTI LITERATURE – A CASE STUDY OF THE ADI GRANTH –

M S AHLUWALIA*

The modern age is, in some ways, the breeding ground for alienation and anxiety. On the one hand, the elite society exploits science and technology for its own comfort and convenience, and on the other hand, the unlettered masses in Asia, Africa and South America struggle for bare existence and vainly hope for supernatural intervention to end their woes.

Arguably, globalization cannot change the basic struggle for existence, instinct and aspirations. It may only make people more impatient with *status quo*. It is here that the gospel of Guru Granth Sahib becomes relevant.

The holy Sikh scripture is inspiring, yet rooted in scientific thought and practical wisdom of self-reliance. It asserts the primacy of moral and spiritual principles and does not inhibit the use of rational investigation. The word of God in *Gurbani* is the fount of all those values, which enhance and give positive direction to life on this earth. If followed faithfully, the idea of universal peace, justice, brotherhood, freedom and happiness shall never elude mankind. Herein lies the perennial value of Guru Granth Sahib.

Guru Granth Sahib comprises the hymns of Guru Nanak and his five successors, the medieval Hindu Bhagats, Muslim Sufi poets and other God-oriented persons associated with the Sikh Gurus. All these writings are collectively known as *Gurbani*. In its literal sense, it means 'speech', 'words' or 'utterances' of the Gurus, which have come down to them in a state of spiritual revelation of God. Therefore, *Gurbani* is not merely a product of speculation, but the very 'word' of God.

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The history of Sikh scriptural tradition dates back to the times of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion. To express his spiritual experience, Guru Nanak has evolved a curious blend of music and poetry which has an enchanting effect on the listeners. We are informed that during his missionary tours to various lands, Guru Nanak carried with him a book, which is believed to be nothing else but a collection of his hymns, including the writings of medieval Bhagats that he had collected over the years. Lastly, when he settled at Kartarpur (now in Pakistan on the right bank of river Ravi) he directed Bhai Lehna, his spiritual heir to compile his hymns into a codex which he bestowed on him on his succession to Guruship.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib is the name by which the holy book of the Sikhs is commonly known. It is voluminous (1430 pages in the standard form, with the statutory approval of the *Sbiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee*, Amritsar) anthology prepared by the fifth Guru, Guru Arjun Dev (1563-1606) containing sacred verses by Sikh Gurus and some contemporary saints and men of devotion.

THE LIVING GURU

Over the years, the holy book has received the honours due to the living Gurus. No Sikh assembly can, properly speaking, be so named unless the holy book is present in it. The contributors to *Guru Granth Sahib* came from variety of class and creed background. There were among them the Hindus as well also Muslims, the so-called low-castes as also high castes. Its final text had been transcribed by 1st August, 1604.

In the Sikh system, as is well known, the word Guru is used for the ten prophet-preceptors, Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, and for none other. Now *Guru Granth Sahib*, the sacred book that was apotheosized by the last Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, before he passed away in 1708, fulfils the office of the Guru. In all Sikh literature after Guru Gobind Singh, the Holy Book is uniformly referred to as *Guru Granth*.

It is for the Sikhs the perennial authority, spiritual as well as historical. The Sikh followers have and will continue to observe their faith more fully, more vividly through the holy *Granth*. It remained central to all what subsequently happened in the Sikh life. It was and

shall remain source of their verbal tradition and shape their intellectual and cultural environment. It would continue to mould the Sikh concept of life. It is from *Guru Granth Sahib* that the Community's ideas, institutions and rituals derive their meaning.

SPIRITUAL POETRY

The *Bani* of *Guru Granth Sahib* is poetry of pure devotion. It prescribes no social code, yet it is the basis of Sikh practice as well as of Sikh devotion. It is the living source of authority, the ultimate guide to spiritual and moral path, pointed by the Gurus.

Every prayer, singly or in groups, is followed by *Ardas*, which is followed by the recitation of these verses:

*"Agya bhai Akal ki tabhi chalayo Panth,
Sob Sikhian ko hukam hai Guru maneo Granth,
Guru granthji maneo pragat Guran ki dehi,
Jo Prabhu ko milibo chabai, khoj shabad main leh".*

(By the command of the Timeless Creator was the *Panth* promulgated; All Sikhs are hereby charged to own the *Granth* as their Guru. Know the *Guru Granth* to be the person visible of the Gurus. They who would seek to meet the Lord, in the word as manifested in the Book shall they discover Him.)

Unlike some other scriptures, *Guru Granth Sahib* is neither history nor mythology nor a collection of incantations. Its contents are spiritual, the vision cosmic and exhortations for the higher life. In this respect, it is a unique scripture among the source books of religion. In the Sikh temple, *Granth Sahib* is kept during the day, brought out in state, prayers offered in its presence, and at night time taken to a duly appointed place for 'retreat'. It is thus treated as a sacred person, the Guru, rather than merely a book.

Thanksgiving for a joyous event or the prayers for the peace of a departed soul, must alike be offered in the presence of *Guru Granth Sahib*. No Sikh marriage can be sanctified except in its presence, with the bride and bride-groom circumambulating it reverently, while the nuptial hymns from its pages are being chanted. Such a practice is resorted to all over the Sikh world. All decisions taken in its presence are held sacred and binding on all.

A remarkable feature of *Guru Granth* is that apart from the writings

of the Sikh Gurus, it also contains the writings of some religious teachers of Hinduism, Islam, etc. This is consistency with the religious traditions and universal love of India which respects all religions and believes in the universal brotherhood. "Indian spiritual tradition" according to Radhakrishnan, "is not content with mere toleration. There can be no goodwill of fellowship when we only tolerate each other. We must appreciate other faiths, recognise that they offer rich spiritual experiences and encourage sacrificial living and inspire their followers to a noble way of life."

The Sikh Gurus who compiled the *Adi Granth*, had this noble quality of appreciation of whatever was available in other religious traditions. The saints belong to the whole world. They are universal men, who free our minds from bigotry and superstition, dogma and emphasise the implicit of religion and universal love.

At a time when men were not conscious of their failures, Guru Nanak appeared to renovate the spirit of religion and universal love. He, followed by other Sikh Gurus through their writings contained in the *Granth Sahib*, tried to build a nation of self respecting men and women, devoted to God and their leaders filled with a sense of equality, universal love and brotherhood for all. Guru Nanak's own life and teachings were a symbol of harmony between the two great religions of India – Hinduism and Islam. A popular verse describes him as a *guru* for the Hindus and a *pir* for the Muslims.

"*Guru Nanak Shah fakir, Hindu ka guru Mussalman ka pir*".

A look at the contributors of the *Guru Granth* will reveal that no geographical or provincial barriers limit it. Similarly, words from Punjabi, Hindi, Arabic, Sanskrit, Persian and various vernaculars merge into one another in the *Adi Granth* presenting a kaleidoscope of images which are within the common man's grasp.

Universal Love: Every hymn inscribed in the 1,430 pages of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, bears the stamp of universal love, magnificence of God and brotherhood of man. In Guru Arjun's *Sukhmani*, which is a classic composition of profound comfort for the soul-sick, it is stated: '*Prabh ki jot sagal ghat sohe*' i.e. the Divine light illuminates all beings. Every day the followers of *Guru Granth* say a prayer for the entire humanity wherever they are:

'Nanak nam chardbi kala, Terey bhane sarbat ka bhal'

i. e. "Sayeth Nanak, in Thy name and will, let good be the legacy of the whole mankind".

The *Guru Granth's* compilation marks an important movement in our religious and literary history. The writings of the different saints included in the *Granth* have shed lustre on the age by their religious fervour which excited a new awakening.

Guru Nanak, through his writings in *Guru Granth Sahib*, did away with the barriers of caste, and regarded all human beings as equal. 'There was no Hindu, no Mussalman' in his eyes. He had disciples among both the Hindus and the Muslims. Bala, a Hindu disciple, and Mardana, a Muslim one, followed and waited upon him throughout their lives. He brought about a revolution in the then existing society by his new message of divine love and universal brotherhood. He also aimed at political freedom, as he criticises the existing rulers: "This age is like a drawn sword, the kings are butchers":

Goodness hath taken wings and flown.

In the dark night of falsehood,

I espy not the moon of Truth anywhere;

I grope after truth and am bewildered.'

BELIEF IN ONE GOD

As to its religion, one important point is that *Gum Granth Sahib* and Sikhism do not acknowledge multiple deities, but accept only one, single God. One merit of this sort of religious system is that here the possibility of mutual intolerance among humans on grounds of religion is largely diminished, if not absolutely eradicated. Needless to say, this kind of religious attitude is desperately needed in the present-a-day world.

Be that as it may, it would be a mistake to look at Sikhism as enshrined in *Guru Granth Sahib* just a system of thinking. Sikhism upholds a specific style of living, a particular set of beliefs and convictions, to live by. A very important component of this life-style asks us to be strictly guided by the principle of equality. The principle of equality requires us to acknowledge that we all are equal, so that none of us is entitled to claim a moral position, which is valid exclusively for ourselves. We, in our moral claims, must be guided by

the thought whether these claims fail to care and honour other, and if any such claim threatens the human dignity of others, we must abandon it.

INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE

In *Guru Granth Sahib*, the dialogue is the wholesome process of knowing, saying and understanding.² For the accomplishment of this process, *Guru Granth Sahib*, while telling the people *Jab lagi dunia rabie Nanak kichhu suniai kichhu kabiai*.³, further stresses that apart from having meaningful and factual dialogue, one should take care of the self-analysis first. In fact *Gurbani* is well aware of the fact that whose mind is all dark, they do not stand true to their words.

According to *Gurbani* the *sambad* or dialogue is the effort towards understanding the genuineness of the issues posed. In Sikhism the base of a worthy life is the doctrine that one should have partnership with the virtues of the people and should keep away from mischiefs of others – *sanjh karijai gunan keri chbodi avagan chaliai*.⁴ A Sikh gives no recognition to life lived in monasteries or jungles. It rather approves that life which prepares the individual to be of the world while not becoming worldly. Sikh life is the life of responsibility towards the surrounding and, therefore, its spirituality and spiritual dialogue have some distinction from other ways of life.

Sikh religion gives due importance to man as an individual but it does not allow the interests of the society to be sacrificed for the sake of one man, whosoever he may be. It approves humanitarianism but not humanism of the West which can flourish only in autocracy, apostasy and narrowness of heart and mind. The dialogue with others in view of conquering one and all absolutely does not fit in the thought frame of *Guru Granth Sahib*. Guru Nanak being fully conscious of the egoist personality likely to emerge from debating behaviour pattern of the society, says, that the researcher flourishes whereas the debater perishes – *khoji upajai badi binasai hau bali bali gur kartara*.⁵ Debate creates suicidal ego known as a chronic ailment (*diragh roga*) in *Gurbani*. Only *sewa* or the 'service' can help get rid of this malady and the service alone can fill one's heart with love. Guru Amar Das further the view of Guru Nanak by saying – *badi binsahi sevak sevahi gur kai beti piari*⁶ – the debater perishes and the humble-servant of the Guru serves with

love and devotion. Nandev also holds that if somebody is desirous of enjoying the Ram-rasayan, he should never indulge in polemics - *bad bibad kabu sio na kijai. rasana ram rasayan pijai.*

One of the major causes of conflicts amongst the people of the world is intolerance for the opposite view. If, however, we adopt a complementary approach to understand different religions we may discover that seemingly irreconcilable points of view need not be contradictory. These, on deeper understanding, may be found to be mutually illuminating. The "Complementary Principle" inspires people practicing different norms and forms of life to respect others' points of view even if those are opposite to theirs'.

GURU GRANTH SAHIB AND ENVIRONMENT

In *Gurbani*, nature has been called '*Kudrat*'. The other words used for nature are shrine, temple, home, workshop, playground, garden and divine manifestation of God. The term nature is generally applied to the 'concept, structure and development of socio-temporal world'. It is the entirety of phenomenal existence. Man with his ever-increasing mastery of the laws of nature and ever expanding reach of technology, has increasingly transformed Nature into what has been called "noosphere"⁷ The Sikh Gurus were great lovers and devotees of nature. They repeatedly emphasized how the nature influences our body, mind and soul, and how it moulds our personality and how in natural environment the communion between God and man takes place easily.

The Sikh religion has been essentially rural based. The development of Sikh religion took place in rural Pakistani Punjab. One of the important concepts of Sikh religion is that man should live in harmony with himself, with society and with nature so as to achieve spirituality and happiness. Religion has two functions to perform; one to live peacefully yourself (with your inner-self) and, two, to live peacefully with your surroundings, including, of course, everything living and non-living.

*'Kudrat kawan kaba vichar'*⁸

'How can I describe (the Lord's) creative potency?'

According to Sikh thought, Nature is not merely the handicraft of God, or even the signature of His Power, it is His very countenance

— sacred, immaculate and splendid. The laws of nature are but agencies of His wisdom. He Himself takes on multiple shapes to create what we call nature:

*"Anik roop khin mabi kudrat dharda,"*⁹

(i.e., in a moment does He transform Himself into innumerable forms of Nature.)

Through the contemplation of Nature, by steps, man can ascend to God. One who is in love with Nature, cannot stay without loving its Creator. His power and His wisdom are manifest in Nature. Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru exclaims:

*Tu achraj kudrat teri bisma*¹⁰

(i.e., astonishing are You and Your created nature is wonderment.)

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh faith never claimed to be scholar or a thinker. All he claimed was that he was a singer and a poet. To him, therefore, Nature was an aesthetic appearance. This is what he sang about the Nature:

"Kudrat disse kudrat sunie kudrat bhao sachsaar,

Kudrat patali, akasi kudrat sorb akar.

Kudrat Ved Puran kateba, kudrat sarb vichar,

Kudrat paon, pani baisantar kudrat dharti khak,

Sob teri kudrat tu kadar karta paki nahi pak,

Nanak hukme andar vekhe varte tako tak."¹¹

(i.e., Nature we see Nature we hear, Nature is our awe and wonder and joy. Nature the skies, Nature is self-esteem as in conceit. Air and water and fire and nature is the soil of earth..... O, Creator Nature is hallowed by your holy Name)

This sublime song of Guru Nanak brings into relief four complimentary conceptualizations of nature:

- i. Nature is an aesthetic experience, generating in us awe, wonder and joy.
- ii. Man is not in confrontation with Nature, he is a part of it. Man's inner nature, his thoughts, inclinations and even love, are as much a part of nature as the worlds and skies.
- iii. Nature is fully alive, not inert material but living vigorously.
- iv. Finally, Nature is not apart from God. It is His wonderful craft. That is why the Guru exclaims:

*"Bisam bhae bismad dekh dekh kudrat teria"*¹²

(i.e., I am wonderstruck beholding your created Nature.)

The experience of the variety of the beauty of Nature is always so overwhelming that whoever is familiar with it may find in the following lines of Guru Nanak, an echo in the feeling:

*"Balhari kudrat vasia, Tera ant na jae likhia."*¹³

(i.e., I am a sacrifice unto Your name. Who can Its limit know?)

Even the subjectivity and spirituality of man are part of Nature. Nature not only surrounds him, it is also within him, functioning there. All the elements of Nature support and sustain man. There is verse in *Guru Granth Sahib* that occurs twice in "the Holy book and every holy service of the Sikh congregation is supposed to be concluded with the recitation of it. It underlines the functions that nature plays in the physical sustenance and spiritual advancement of man. It begins as follows:

*"Pawan guru pani pita, Mata dharat Mahat,
Diwas rat doi dai daya, kbele sagal jagat"*¹⁴

(i.e., Air is the Guru, water the father, earth the great mother, and day and night are the two female and male nurses, in whose lap the entire world plays.)

Thus, the universal idea and the humanizing touch that the *Guru Granth Sahib* has in its appeal and form, has an everlasting value in our human society. The uniqueness lies in the fact that when a Sikh honours and follows guidance from the Holy Granth, he offers his devotion as much as to Farid, a Muslim Saint, Jaidev, a Hindu Bhakta and at the same time to Guru Nanak and Guru Arjun, the compiler of *Guru Granth Sahib*. It is thus a commonwealth of the men of God.

To conclude, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is and shall henceforth remain, for all times to come, a lighthouse and a Guru for the Sikhs and other seekers of Truth. Sikhism undoubtedly stands for a catholic faith, which is meant for all, without any distinction of race or creed, and without any limits of time and space.

In these days of globalization, the lofty ideals of unity of God and brotherhood of mankind can secure the prerogative of equal rights for the entire human race and serve as the most effective basis for a new universal human civilization of love, peace and harmony. In the

present-day context, the perennial value of the *Adi Granth* lies in the fact that its teachings, if followed in true letter and spirit, can bring man closer to nature, closer to society and, above all, closer to his own self.

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4. *Ibid*, p. 766.
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7. 'Noosphere' is a term introduced by the nature philosopher Tielhard de Chardin, whose contention was that in the ordinary course of evolution of living things the biosphere is being supplanted by the noosphere. Cited in J. S. Neki, in *The Sikh Review* (Kolkata) vol. 52(3). p. 29.
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HUMAN HAIR AND MODERN SCIENCE

KUNDAN SINGH*

During the last few decades, science has made tremendous impact on the thinking and living habits of human beings. Every event is interlinked with several others and influences life in several ways. Modern scientific discoveries have dealt a severe blow to old traditions of human race, especially the religious beliefs. We often forget that man is only an investigator of the universe, whereas the creator is someone else. Whatever human beings have accomplished, they have done only by using the pre-existing materials and have themselves created nothing new. Almighty God has created everything in this universe by applying highly subtle and perfect principles which are not understood to a great extent by humans. So, He has created such a perfect and complete human body in which nothing is superfluous or unwanted.

Many a Sikh youth have miserably failed in maintaining their traditional shape due to lack of preaching, predominance of western influence and senseless pursuit of fashion. It is a cause of constant worry for devout Sikhs here and abroad. Thus far, the human hair has been the victim of fashion's fun and fury. All this has happened due to ignorance about the usefulness of hair that has been revealed by modern science, and one gets convinced that science has rather been confirming the truthfulness of instructions issued by the Sikh Gurus through sacred revelation (Gurbani) hundreds of years back, which needs to be explained in a separate write-up.

Guru ji ordained the Sikhs to maintain unshorn hair, and strictly prohibited their removal, because Guru ji knew the usefulness of hair and considered it to be a gift of Almighty to human beings. Guru ji has

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mentioned that only whatever is seen by him is revealed in Gurbani, as is evident from the stanza below:

ਸੰਤਨ ਕੀ ਸੁਣਿ ਸਾਚੀ ਸਾਖੀ ॥ ਸੇ ਬੋਲਹਿ ਜੋ ਖੋਖਹਿ ਆਖੀ ॥

Guru Granth Sahib, p. 894

Recently several articles have been published about the philosophical aspects of human hair including ones written by S. Sarup Singh Alag, Dr Chanda Singh and several other authors and one whole issue has been devoted to this topic in the *Sada Virsa Sada Gaurav*. But here an effort has been made, mainly to highlight the modern scientific findings. Another point needs a bit of discussion here. Some people contest that if we carry full grown hair why should we trim our nails which are also mother Nature's gift. Wear and tear is a constant process going on in the body. Even epithelium (superficial layer) of skin is being perpetually shed off, so are the hair. For removing various dead parts of the body, different methods are adopted. We remove non-living nails only and no one trims the living ones. Similarly we comb out the shed off hair.

PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

There has been a definite link between spiritualism and growth of hair. Almost all the prophets (men of God) had full grown hair and beards, as is evident from contemporary writings and paintings. Hinduism is one of the oldest religions of the world, and the ancient Hindus bore unshorn hair. Hair flowing over the shoulders indicated priests called Brahmans. Hair locks twirled over the head were a symbol of soldiers or Kashatryas. Sacred Ganges flowed from the heavens into the luxuriant hair (Keshas) of Lord Shiva to reach the earth. There are stories that Hindus were forced to part with their hair. During recent times, noble laureate Rabindra Nath Tagore, Guru Golwalkar and many *Rishis* are other examples. Lord Budha's paintings depict his hair and beard. A great power was vested in the hair of Samson. Prophet Mohammad's hair is preserved as a relic in a Mosque in Srinagar. Jewish priests also grow hair and beard.

Unshorn hair is a part and parcel of Sikh personality. There are many references to this fact in holy Sri Guru Granth Sahib, viz.,

ਨਾਪਾਕ ਪਾਕੁ ਕਰਿ ਹਧੂਰਿ ਹਦੀਸਾ ਸਾਬਤ ਸੂਰਤਿ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਸਿਰਾ ॥ (ਪੰਨਾ ੧੦੮੪)

ਸੇ ਦਾੜੀਆਂ ਸਚੀਆ ਜਿ ਗੁਰ ਚਰਨੀ ਲਗੀਨਿ ॥ (ਪੰਨਾ ੧੪੧੯)

Kes, Kesh's or full-grown hair all over the body is one of the five "K's", or external symbols of every Sikh. Guru Gobind Singh Ji held the hair in great esteem and ordained:

ਹਿਰੈ ਮੇਰ ਆਗਿਆ ਸੁਨੇ ਹੇ ਪਿਆਰੇ ॥

ਬਿਨਾ ਤੇਗ ਕੇਸੇ ਦਿਵੇ ਨ ਦੀਦਾਰੇ ॥

This is my order, listen O ! dear ones: Do not show me your face without sword and hair.

When Guru Gobind Singh Ji left the fortress of Chamkaur, during a severe winter night, he decided to go barefooted, since many Sikhs had fallen martyrs in the battle field and in the darkness, Guru Ji did not want to commit the sacrilege by treading over martyrs' hair with his shoes on, though Guru Ji had to undergo a great hardship in passing through jungle bare-footed. In olden times philosophers, men of wisdom and even scientists grew hair and beard. Sayyed Waris Shah, a respected Punjabi poet has described the moustaches and beard as symbols of self respect and wisdom, respectively:

ਬਿਨਾ ਸ਼ਰਮ ਮੁਛਾ, ਬਿਨਾ ਅਕਲ ਦਾਹੜੀ ਬਿਨਾ ਤਲਬ ਫੌਜਾਂ, ਭਰਮਾਚ ਨਾਹੀ ॥

Dignity without mustachios, wisdom without beard, army without wages, do not look impressive.

Growing beard and moustache in one form or the other has been the liking of soldiers and warriors all over the world. Interested readers may refer to Reynolds book entitled "Beards".

Attempts have been made to explain the functions of hair on different parts of the body as indicators of age and maturity, and distinguishing features between male and female. Hair on the scalp and beard afford protection against injury, heat and cold. Those in the nostrils and eye lashes protect against dust and other environmental pollutants.

Reynold (1950) has quoted from other authors that most shaven men lose their teeth before time, or at least suffer from toothache (p. 699), also shaving has been said to weaken a man physically and prove injurious to his health. This author has further quoted an American correspondent reporting a higher death rate in shaven men than the ones with beards, and has advocated that insurance companies should consider this point (p. 273).

Despite all this, the hair has generally been considered as a superfluous appendage. But modern scientific investigations have

brought out the importance of hair much more clearly than ever before.

HAIR AS DIAGNOSTIC MATERIAL

A number of studies have revealed interesting relationship between trace element metabolism of the body and its concentration in hair and also with several diseases in human beings. Hair analysis has become an established method in clinical pathology and Medical jurisprudence (Klevay), (1972). He has stressed the advantages of using hair as a biopsy material for clinical and epidemiological studies. This material has not been exploited to its full potential, since many workers have attempted to correlate the concentration of certain elements in human hair with environmental exposure. Only a few have attempted to identify the factors that influence the concentration of these elements in hair. Human hair is a potentially reliable index of trace mineral nutritional deficiencies, sufficiencies and toxicity, and the use of hair for this purpose has been a subject of a number of recent reports (Hambidge *et al* 1972). Hambidge and Baurn (1972) have claimed that their investigations have provided a strong evidence for potential value of hair chromium determinations as index of chromium nutritional status. Lazar (1974), while serving a note of caution, has remarked that hair could be more useful diagnostically, provided analysis was done under standard conditions. Need for elimination of physical and chemical factors like waving, straightening, dyeing, bleaching, hair tonics and spraying before analysis has been stressed.

Trace elements occur in the body in very low concentrations (less than 0.1% of body weight). Despite their such low concentrations, many of them have important effect on functioning of different body systems, and are known to be essential for human health, while others, even in trace concentrations, are harmful. An excess or a deficiency of any trace element can be wholly or partly responsible for a number of disorders. Thus, it is important to accurately determine the trace element levels in the body. Modern techniques have made it possible to determine accurately the concentrations of trace elements as low as 0.1 ppm or even less. To obtain representative picture of trace element status it must be decided as to which part of the body should be taken as a specimen.

The main sources are blood and urine (Laker, 1982). These two

methods reflect body trace element status over different scales of time. Concentrations in blood are transient, related to supply of trace elements during previous hours or days, offering information on immediate levels. Urine gives information only about what the body has lost but not about the amount retained. Hair on the other hand takes up certain trace elements and retains them providing a lasting record of their levels over the previous few months.

Traditionally people have relied on blood for sampling which is acceptable for trace elements like zinc giving information about the amount available for immediate use. For elements as heavy metals, where cumulative intake needs to be known, blood gives very little information. Similar arguments apply to testing for arsenic and mercury. When a factory released some arsenic compound into a residential area, it was sometime before residents were examined and blood levels had declined to normal, but hair has been successfully used to determine the presence of those contaminants, and blood has been found to be a less reliable index of exposure to Mercury or Arsenic than hair. Several workers have emphasized that blood is of no help in determining trace elements, and even other elements are inadequately represented by blood analysis. In view of above stated difficulties limitations of using blood as a specimen are clear, hair provides a good and reliable alternative. It offers following advantages and provides better assessment of normal trace element concentrations, because short-term variations are averaged out.

1. By taking, different lengths of hair equal to a few weeks or months and measuring bulk concentrations which can be averaged and concentration over that period may be found.
2. Hair offers a good way of discerning long-term variation in trace element concentration. This may be done by measuring the variations alongwith the length of hair equal to several months, or by taking samples periodically, say monthly. This approach has been used successfully to demonstrate cases of abnormal zinc metabolism in pregnant women who subsequently gave birth to *spina bifida* children and alleged poisoning of Napoleon Bona Parte by periodic doses of arsenic.
3. The concentrations of most trace elements are relatively high in hair, compared to the rest of the body, especially the blood. Average

concentration of chromium for example is about 50 times higher in hair while that of cobalt is about 100 times higher (under-wood 1997).

4. Hair provides a record of past as well as present trace element levels. Samples may be taken retrospectively after a woman has been diagnosed pregnant, for instance samples can be taken to discover the conditions prior to conception.
5. Specimen can be collected more quickly and easily than specimens of blood, urine or any other tissue. Taking of samples, requires no special training or equipment and can be done without pain or embarrassment to the patients. (Sikhs could take samples from combed out hair.)
6. Samples can be kept indefinitely without need for special storage conditions as they do not deteriorate.

Prasad (1966) reported that mineral contents of hair ranges upto 2% in human beings, varying with sex, diet and season etc. It is noteworthy that a person shaving off 100 gms of hair loses 2 gms of trace elements which may be difficult to replenish especially under poor nutritional conditions. Changes in the composition of hair provide a record of alterations of the mineral metabolism of a person and this can be applied to measure deficiencies and sufficiencies.

HAIR AS STORE HOUSE OF TRACE ELEMENTS

(i) HAIR ZINC AND ITS FUNCTIONS:

A particular attention has been paid to zinc as a trace element in human body due to its involvement in a number of functions. Hair zinc levels indicate the changes better than serum zinc, and zinc levels of hair have been reported to be exactly twice those of bone, which deserves attention; since much zinc storage takes place in the bone. Prasad (1966) has also reported a seasonal variation in zinc levels of hair with marked increase in summer. This could not be attributed to increased dietary zinc content but to some unknown seasonal influence. Due to increased hair zinc levels during summer, a remission of diseases like seborrhoea, acne and finger infections has been observed.

Decreased hair zinc levels have been found in young male dwarfs in Middle East, and on supplementation with zinc sulphate such individuals showed increased growth (Prasad, 1966). The mechanism of growth retardation is not fully understood at present. But

hypopituitarism, leading to growth failure, retarded osseous developments, hypogonadism, depression of endogenous adrenocorticotrophic hormone production are supposed to be the cause. Zinc is also essential for Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) synthesis, which is involved in protein metabolism and is essential for growth. Hair zinc of women is higher than men, may be this provision has been made by mother-nature to enable the mothers to share it with their progeny. Low zinc level during early pregnancy in women has been associated with congenital malformations, abnormal deliveries and prolonged gestation. Low hair zinc levels during gestation and postpartum were found to be good predictors of pregnancy complications and abnormal labour.

Volkow, (cited by Prasad, 1966) found a significant decrease in zinc content of plasma, aorta, liver, myocardium and pancreas in patients suffering from atherosclerosis. These findings were confirmed by Prasad (1966) who observed hair zinc levels of atherosclerosis patients to be much lower than normal.

Cadmium in minute quantities produces permanent sterility in rats and later on tumor formation. But administration of zinc protects them from this damage' (Prasad 1966). A good correlation between hair zinc levels and rate of wound healing has also been shown to exist. Healing rate constantly increases with increasing zinc levels in hair, with zinc sulphate supplementation. Further, a striking decrease in the hair zinc content was demonstrated in all patients suffering from burns, Hair zinc levels following burn, decreased, and later on slowly increased over a period of time, thus indicating that hair zinc is mobile and is in balance with rest of the body zinc stores. It is not permanently fixed to hair and can be shared with the rest of the body in the hour of need. Plasma zinc level steeply falls 48 hours after the onset of *angina pectoris*.

Zinc has been reported to play a vital role in the normal functioning of human body, and its deficiency causes a number of diseases. Amador *et al* (1975) reported much higher hair zinc in healthy children (111.47+12.7) ug/gm than in diabetic (14+6.1 ug/gm). Zinc is a constituent of several metalloenzymes, and actually 70 such enzymes have been identified (Burch and Sullivan, 1976) and holds insulin in granules of Beta cell islets. Thus Aksoy (cited by Amador *et al* 1975) suggested that diabetes could be the result of zinc depletion.

Abnormalities of zinc metabolism have also been reported in cirrhosis of liver and acute myocardial infarction, idiopathic loss of taste and smell with subsequent reversion to normalcy or marked improvement following zinc supplementation. Hambidge *et al* (1972) stated that levels of zinc were not directly related to age, but reflected the zinc nutritional status at any age. Consistent improvement in appetite, dietary intake and increase in growth were observed following dietary zinc supplementation.

Children with low zinc content in hair had impaired sense of taste which was corrected on zinc supplementation. Sever and Emamel (cited by Burch and Sullivan 1976) suggested that congenital malformation of central nervous system in man may be related to maternal zinc deficiency during pregnancy. Amador *et al* (1975) have reported low hair zinc concentrations in acrodermatitis enteropathica patients and several other diseases.

Hambidge and Droegemueller (1974) found that trace mineral deficiencies are not limited to subjects who are economically deprived. Increased demands for micro nutrients are imposed by pregnancy and low concentrations of certain elements in plasma and hair can result. For example, zinc content of hair is depressed during pregnancy. Eads and Lambdin (1973) observed significantly higher zinc content in the dark coloured hair of both sexes. Gupta and Miglani (1977) also reported lower hair zinc levels in cases of Indian childhood cirrhosis of liver. Zinc level in the basal half of hair was relatively lower than that of the apical half. Gupta *et al* (1978) found that serum and hair zinc in these patients of cirrhosis were markedly diminished as compared to normal subjects. Misra *et al* (1989) reported similar findings, and found that hair analysis was a reliable and simple method for available zinc status and tissue zinc levels. Also, hair zinc content is the reflection of chronic zinc status over the period hair has been growing. Atmaca *et al* (1989) found that zinc was involved in many eye functions, such as dark adaptation which required retinal reductase enzymes that have zinc as the activating constituent. In patients with retinitis pigmentosa zinc levels in plasma and hair were found to be low.

(II) CHROMIUM

Chromium is another useful trace element whose sufficiency or insufficiency is reflected by hair. Hambidge and Baur (1972) observed

high mean concentrations of hair chromium during early post-natal life parallel to higher concentrations of chromium in other new born tissues. Occasionally individual newborn hairs' chromium levels were found to be low similar to low individual findings observed in other tissues.

Chromium deficiency has been implicated in disorders of carbohydrate metabolism in a number of human diseases. Hambidge et al (1968) have shown that juvenile diabetics mellitus patients have lower amount of chromium in hair.

A glucose tolerance factor (GTF) in which chromium is a co-factor for insulin activity has been identified by Mirtz (1967, cited by Chari *et al* 1973). Burch and Sullivan (1976) also found significantly lower hair chromium levels in juvenile diabetes as compared to normal controls. Studies of these workers also revealed significant reduction in hair chromium levels in multiparous women as compared to nulliparous women. Further work may provide useful information in cases of steely and kinky hair which are copper deficiency syndromes. There also appears to be a link between the growth of hair and presence of sufficient copper in the system. Selenium, another useful trace mineral linked with vitamin E in the body is also stored in the hair.

(III) HARMFUL ELEMENTS

Waldron and Stofen (1974) found that hair concentrates more lead per unit weight than any other tissue in the body and the union with hair follicular protein is so strong that it is almost impossible to remove it from there. Similar is the story with arsenic. There is no known useful function of these elements in the body, hence the hair with-hold these harmful elements and remove them from the circulation, thus, preventing them from producing harmful effects.

NUTRITIONAL DEFICIENCY DISEASES AND HAIR

Bradfield (1974) reported the use of hair tissue as a medium for differential diagnosis of protein-calorie malnutrition. Distinct morphological defects are provoked in hair root by nutritional deficiencies, and the same could be used as a measure for the determination of frequency and severity of protein calorie malnutrition in public health practice. A marked difference in the appearance of hair, particularly the root has been observed in Marasmus (chronic condition due to deficiency of both protein and calories) and

Kwashiorkor (due to a protein deficient but calorie sufficient diet). It has been suggested that different patterns are found in these two clearly different types of stress on the hair follicles. Changes in hair shaft colouration, thickness and appearance have long been recognized in Kwashiorkor and are a part of clinical diagnosis of this condition. With protein calorie malnutrition (Marasmus) lustrous hair becomes fine textured, dry, dull and lusterless in appearance. In addition, dark hair may exhibit patches of red or white discolouration. The shaft of the hair provides a readily available history. The duration of a nutritional insult may be calculated by measuring the shaft length of the area of depigmentation as the rate of growth of hair is 0.2 m.m. per day (Bradfield and Jelliffe 1974). Repeated bands of lightened hair colour suggest distinct periods of malnutrition and it is a useful measure of chronicity.

Hair roots are preferable to hair shaft as a more recent indicator of nutritional status. Also acute and chronic conditions may be distinguished by the use of hair roots, hair shaft. Johnson and Roe (1975) used hair root morphology for determination of nutritional status of children and observed this method to be useful to distinguish between well nourished and severely malnourished ones.

Hair decolouration or discolouration has been reported to be an early symptom of malnutrition. Pearson (1974) observed loss of hair and skin pigment in African patients of tuberculosis and Kwashiorkor.

HAIR PATTERNING AND BRAIN DEVELOPMENT:

Smith and Gong (1973) observed that hair patterning over the scalp (head) and upper face provide a rather indelible record in relation to growth and topography of the brain and upper facial structures during early foetal period (from 10 to 16 weeks). Aberrant scalp hair patterning in patients with severe defects of early brain development, which must have been present prior to hair follicular development have been reported to fit with the hypothesis that hair patterning conforms to the presumed shape and size of the brain at the time of hair follicle growth. Further, the other defects of brain development in which the age of onset of problems is not obvious, hair patterning may provide an important clue to the timing of the defects, implying altered growth and/or shape of the brain prior to 16 weeks of foetal

life. This has been said to be especially true for cases of severe microcephaly. Such observations have great prognostic value.

Scalp hair pattern serves as a permanent mark of brain development. Abnormalities in brain growth are associated with abnormal hair whorl patterning; for example, counter Clock wise scalp hair whorls are indicative of schi-zophrenia (Alexander *et al* 1992).

HAIR TRACE MINERALS AND LEARNING ABILITY

Pihl and Parkes (1977) were able to distinguish between 31 learning disabled and 22 normal learning children by trace element analysis of the hair alone, and obtained an accuracy of 98% with this procedure. Tests revealed unexpectedly high levels of cadmium, lead, lithium and cobalt in the hair of children with learning disabilities as compared to the group of normal learning children. In the opinion of these workers, trace element pattern of hair may provide answer pertaining to etiology and treatment of learning disability in addition to being a fruitful diagnostic procedure.

HAIR AND DRUG ABUSE:

COCAINE

Self-reported histories of drug abuse are inaccurate and misleading since the subjects often deny the use of drugs. Reproductive effects of cocaine use by mothers are a cause of public anxiety in the western world. Hair analysis for cocaine use in previous months is the most dependable procedure for verification of material exposure or non exposure to cocaine, during pregnancy Babies of women who used cocaine during pregnancy also have proved positive for cocaine on their hair analysis (Graham & Karen, 1989).

METHAMPHETAMINE

Hair analysis for methamphetamine content coincided with self reported drug abuse histories (Nakahara *et al* 1990).

SMOKING

Maternal cigarette smoking during pregnancy is associated with foetal risks in short and long terms. Women who smoked 5-25 cigarettes per day during pregnancy had hair concentration of nicotine and its break-down product cotinine to the extent of 21 ± 18 and 3.7 ± 8.8 ng per milligram, respectively, and the hair of their babies had a bit lower concentrations (Klein *et al* 1993). There was a significant

correlation between maternal and infant hair concentration of both nicotine and cotinine. These workers have concluded that hair estimation of nicotine etc. may provide a better clue to long term systemic exposure, to the toxic constituents of cigarettes and provide a better prediction of fetal risk.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION ABOUT HAIR

Ear Canal Hair and Coronary Heart Disease: Combined presence of ear canal hair and ear lobe crease was found to be significantly associated with coronary heart disease. This combination yielded high sensitivity (90%) and the lowest false negative rate (10%). Association between ear canal hair and coronary artery disease may be due to long-term exposure to high androgens to cause both ear canal hair growth and coronary artery disease. Another androgen sensitive trait, i.e. male pattern baldness has been recognized as a predictor of coronary thrombosis in men (Hagner *et al*, 1984). Verma *et al* (1988) confirmed the above findings in Indian population.

Wells (1989) observed that grey hair illuminated at one end emit light at the other side. Reduction in light intensity was noted with increased hair length, but by far the most important factor was hair colour, almost no light was transmitted by brown hair. Grey hair acts as a natural fibre optic which can transmit light to its matrix, follicular epithelium and dermis. What effect light transmission down the hair produces needs investigation. It may be concerned with maturity and wisdom, is any body's guess. Blood groups have been determined by hair analysis. High sulphur proteins in hair have been used for forensic hair comparison, and so on. It can be hopefully expected that further scientific work shall uncover more things about hair, which may be unknown at present.

CONCLUSIONS

Above observations vividly show that hair is not a superfluous appendage, but has important functions to perform, of which most of us are not aware. It is as responsive to the assault of diseases and malnutrition as any other part of body. Considering the shaving and having full grown hair one could argue that anything which grows needs energy to do so (hair growth needs proteins especially) which should be true of hair as well. Unshorn hair of a person stops growing

after attainings a certain maximum length, but the hair of a shaven person keeps on growing; the more frequently he shaves, the more it grows. In other words, if the cut hair of such a person be placed end to end through-out his life time and the length be compared to the hair of an unshaven person, it shall be observed that the shaven off person grew much more hair than the unshaven person. Hence a shaven off person spends much more energy on growing extra hair, which could have been utilized by the body for some other useful purpose. Supposedly, the shaven person should become wrinkled earlier than an unshaven person. But no controlled studies are available to prove or disprove this supposition.

In view of Parsad's (1966) observations, a person loses 2 grams of trace minerals per 100 grams of hair he shaves, and it may be hard to recoup especially under conditions of poor nutrition.

Chromium content of distal (ends) segments of hair has been found to be significantly higher than proximal ends (Hambridge and Baun, 1972) which may be true of other minerals as well, but that is the portion to be shaven off. Zinc plays a vital role for the well being of human body, and work of Prasad (1966) indicates that hair serves as a rich pool of zinc which gets mobilized into the general body system in the hour of need (e.g. in case of burns and wounds etc.), and protects against dangerous diseases like angina pectoris and diabetes, and get replenished later on. Studies of Bruch and Sullivan (1976) and Hambridge and Droege-muller (1974) indicate that pregnant mothers share chromium and zinc with the foetus which are essential for its healthy development.

The need for trace minerals during prenatal stage cannot be over-emphasized which are so essential for the development of different organ system including the central nervous system. Even a short period of trace mineral deficiency during pregnancy may have adverse effects on the development of young one. These are equally important during post-natal and later life, as these are very essential for normal growth and development (Dwarfs have low hair zinc). But full grown hair serves as a reservoir of essential trace minerals, and helps the body to tide over the adversities.

These may be the reasons why Sikhs are taller statured and more hardy compared to their co-habitants who enjoy similar or better nutritional status. Sikh athletes and players have made a name at national and international levels even though their population is a mere fraction

compared to others. Being non-smokers may be another reason.

Hair is also the graveyard of harmful minerals. Thus far no function is ascribed to lead in the body. Rather it is known as one of the poisonous heavy metals. The hair concentrates more lead per unit weight than any other tissue of the body and it is rather impossible to remove it from that tissue (Haldron and Stofar, 1974). Same is the case of arsenic. Hence the hair plays protective role against lead and arsenic poisoning etc., by eliminating these from general metabolism, whereas it shares the useful minerals like zinc and chromium with the body in the hour of need.

It was strict adoption of Sikh code of conduct (having unshorn hair included), which shaped the Sikh personality and prompted Sir James to remark as under:

"One is not surprised to find that the English, who first described these Sikhs in terms of enthusiasm, material qualities, independent character and their marked superiority, physical and mental, over the people around them and spoke of them as men whose very frames had grown and dilated from the effects of their religion and their manly independence." (Sir James, 1882).

Whatever the Gurus have ordained, is evergreen truth, and we should follow it in letter and, spirit. They have instructed us on all aspects of life, so that we may not go astray. Wherever we may go off the track, we must seek guidance from Gurbani to retrace our path:

ਭੁਲੇ ਸਿਖ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਮਝਾਏ ॥

ਉਝੜਿ ਜਾਏ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪਾਏ ॥

So that we may try not to make mistakes in future:

ਮਾਈ ਸਤਿ ਸਤਿ ਹਰਿ ਸਤਿ ਸਤਿ ਸਤਿ ਸਾਧਾ ॥

ਬਚਨੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਜੋ ਪੂਰੇ ਕਹਿਓ ਮੈ ਛੀਕਿ ਗਾਠਰੀ ਬਾਧਾ ॥

So the youth who have gone astray, should know that whatever Guru Ji told us to do, hundreds of years back, is being fully supported by the modern science.

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MARTYRDOM AND THE SIKHS - CONCEPT AND TRADITION -

HAZARA SINGH*

Martyrdom stands for supreme sacrifice against tyranny, discrimination and exploitation perpetrated by the state or any oppressive system. It excludes the ventures for self-glorification and focuses mainly on a valiant tryst with death for a cause leading to the greatest good of the largest number.

Literally Sikh means *sish* i.e., a disciple, keen to learn. A Sikh is not superstitious or orthodox but an innovator. Being dynamic in approach through the combination of head, heart, and hands, he is not bound by divisive taboos and inhibitions.

Concepts are corollaries of the basic philosophy which lead to the evolution of a particular faith. Traditions get laid when the followers of that way of life display courage to stand by those precepts through enlightened conviction. Often a remedy for a contemporary malady has to be explored, when either no clue to the effect is available in the parent source or a suggestive precedent has been left by the founder. Tradition in Sikhism disfavours ritualism.

CONCEPT AND TRADITION

Sikhism is a realistic philosophy which does not consider the life on earth as an illusory dream. It impresses that living should not be wasted in abstract expectations after death, but be devoted to self-improvement and selfless service of mankind for transforming the mortals into His image (*gurmukhs*).

Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the scripture of Sikhs, includes sermons of such preceptors as believed in the oneness of God, regarded all human beings as equal, and emphasized that worldly activities can be

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sanctified by leading a purposeful life.

A Sikh neither fears death nor shuns anyone due to imaginary prejudices. Being a believer in the Divine will, he strives for defending virtue from being debased by evil, even risking his life in the bargain.

Immortality, i.e., overcoming death, the theme of many an epic, is an unnatural wish and a biological impossibility. It is not to be invoked from any deity, but can be sought through virtuous deeds by leaving noble footprints on the sands of time. Accordingly, initiation in Sikhism is called *amrit chhakna*, i.e., partaking of nectar. God, in His Benevolence, reprieves worldly lapses, if they are sincerely regretted and firmly pledged to be redressed. Desperados get transformed as saints, and the deserters earn esteem as heroes after they switch on to virtuous and duteous way of life. Paying tribute to martyrs and complimenting the selfless devotees forms a conspicuous part of Sikh invocation (*ardas*).

To sum up, recitation (*simran*), service and sacrifice constitute the warp and woof of Sikh faith. Their co-ordination as a way of life, in due course, led also to other broad concepts like nationalism, humanism and the martyrdom for a cause in the caste-ridden, fatalist and inert Indian society.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

The divine revelation as epitomized by Guru Nanak (1469-1539), founder of Sikhism, in the *mool mantra*, preamble to Sri Guru Granth Sahib, conveys that :

- Common parenthood of God implies that all human beings, irrespective of their birth, gender, creed, colour and race, form a universal fraternity;
- The divine Image as Eternal Truth, free from fright and rancour, means that ignorance amounts to profanity and the prejudices created thereby are baseless;
- As God does not have any form, it is not right to worship Him as an idol; and
- The belief in His common parenthood as well as in His existence as unimpeachable truth keeps enthusing the human beings in their march towards excellence.

These precepts when put into practice illustrate :

‘Truth is great but greater still is truthful way of living’

The philosophy of Sikhism passed through four testing stages

from the pronouncement of its gospel to its adoption as a way of life.

First, when its founder revealed Eternal Truth as explained afore.

Second, when Guru Arjun Dev (1563-1606) laid his life for upholding that truth. He blended an element of sacrifice with the persuasive approach of the founder.

Third, when Guru Hargobind (1595-1644) complemented the rosary with sword by adopting the concept of *Miri-Piri* (saint soldier).

These three landmarks prepared the ground for the Sikh faith to enter its fourth and final stage; to practise truth as a way of life through the foundation of the Khalsa in 1699.

Weeding out of superstitions, observance of purposeful secular activities, practice of religious tolerance, love for mankind, respect for women and the recognition of worth instead of stress on status by birth have been the salient precepts propounded by Guru Nanak all over the subcontinent when modern means of transport and communication were not still available. As he rose from the grassroots, his knowledge about the plight of people was firsthand. His observations, as such, made a direct appeal to their emotions, notions and actions, stirring social awakening and moral transformation. The native priestly classes got alarmed as their grip on masses started loosening.

The contemporary rulers branded the Sikhs as atheists and idol breakers. They too began to feel occasionally perturbed when they found the common people, both Hindus and Muslims, getting favourably inclined towards the liberal order pursued by the spiritual successors of Guru Nanak. This is corroborated by the memoirs of Emperor Jehangir.* The Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjun Dev, on his declining to be converted to Islam, was persecuted through callous scorching.

IMPACT OF MARTYRDOM

The martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev marked the beginning of a new epoch in the history of the East. Till then, the cult of non-violence

* The Caliphs, as religious head of Muslim world, allowed bricking alive of children, dragging of women over rough ground with their hair tied tightly to the tail of a trotting horse and the torturing of men of faith to death either through skinning or by making them sit on hot iron sheet or by drowning them after bundling them in a bag containing lime, for breaking their will, if they desisted conversion to Islam. As per Jehangir's memoirs his order regarding the execution of Guru Arjun Dev had the sanction of precedents dealing with atheists, i.e., kafirs.

preached by Lord Buddha (563-483 BC) had remained an academic creed. Guru Arjun Dev was the first to awaken the in-human conscience of wicked rulers through brave and patient suffering. It also impressed on the oppressed that non-co-operation with evil and the urge to uphold virtue are essential modes of conduct for maintaining self-respect.

Passive resistance was effectively practised by the Fifth Nanak more than two centuries before the American polemicist, Henry David Thoreau, who is regarded as the preceptor of both Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi, wrote about it in his treatise, *Walden*

MIRI PIRI

Gautam Buddha denounced the caste system and preached social equality about two thousand years prior to the Sikh Gurus. But his stress on non-violence, which offers no effective alternative and poses threat to territorial integrity and political stability of the country, could not stand the test of times. Guru Hargobind, through the concept of *Miri-Piri*, put forth that the hand that holds rosary for praying, along with earning and sharing it with the needy, is under an equal obligation to defend itself as well as the weak against oppression. It conveyed that just as dependence on offerings is a sin, likewise it is sacrilegious to be cowed down by tyrants.

The preceptors in India had been given to tying a thread around the wrist of a local chieftain for seeking his protection. The concept of *Miri-Piri* implied that the intelligentsia, unable to defend themselves, cannot be independent in their thinking.

Guru Hargobind was also particular about the construction of temple for Hindus and mosque for Muslims wherever a gurdwara was built because he valued the right of people to profess and practise the religious faith of their choice. This was an effective way of demonstrating disagreement with the insular theocratic approach of the rulers. Thus, the ground was prepared for the Sikh faith to enter its final stage.

FOUNDATION OF THE KHALSA

Meditation in seclusion had not proved useful to society; its blending with the service of fellow beings imparted a positive approach to life. The adoption of sacrifice as an element of faith gave a purposeful meaning to worldly pursuits by popularising death for a cause rather than impairing or ending oneself in a vain hope of salvation from the cycle of birth and death. The perusal of Indian

epics reveals that many preceptors and warriors threw away their weapons, abandoning the cause for which they had taken up the cudgels on hearing correctly or incorrectly about the death of their sons. Bravery, lacking the sense of sacrificing personal affinities for a public cause, is an unsteady force. Guru Gobind Singh, tenth and the last in the series of Sikh Gurus, lent a new concept to sacrifice, when he got his near and dear ones martyred for upholding a noble cause. He was just nine when he heard his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, observing that the Hindus could be saved from forcible conversion, if a virtuous person would be prepared to offer his sacrifice. He exhorted him to face the ordeal himself as none was holier than he. Imagine the lofty thinking and rare pluck of a lad depriving himself of paternal protection for the welfare of the oppressed.

Guru Tegh Bahadur is adored as *Hind di Chadar* (protective cover of India), for he faced martyrdom to uphold that all human beings are equally entitled to freedom of conscience. After his father had laid his life but not given up his faith, Guru Gobind Singh resolved that not only the souls of people were to be purified but their muscles also required to be strengthened. He decided to evolve a new order which would not hesitate to wield sword against tyranny. On the Baisakhi day in 1699, he founded the contemplated order giving it the name of 'Khalsa', the pure. He declared:

The Khalsa shall not only be warlike but also sweeten the lives of those whom he is chosen to serve.

Social and political situation in India started undergoing a revolutionary change after the inception of Khalsa.

Guru Gobind Singh raised the concept of martyrdom to new heights when his two sons, in their teens, died fighting. He solemnly submitted: "Oh! Lord, I have surrendered to Thee what belongs to Thee."

Two factors helped the growth of nationalism in India; foundation of the Khalsa and the influence of western system of education. Both have their distinct contribution to the transformation of Indian society.

Sikhism released the soul of people from superstitions. The new order in fact marked the evolution of nationalism in India. For the first time, many people overlooked their castes, felt a sense of brotherhood, realized their obligation towards fellow beings and forged themselves into a disciplined lot. Till then, whosoever invaded India found the victory waiting for him. But after the inception of Khalsa,

the tide turned its course. Not only the foreign aggression was resisted, but the Indian forces during the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh established their supremacy beyond Peshawar. The invasions from north-west ceased thereafter.

Mahatma Gandhi subsequent to his return from South Africa got strengthened in his conviction about the effectiveness of passive resistance as a political tool after the successful non-violent campaign launched by the Sikhs under the banner of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee in 1920-21 for retrieving the control of gurdwaras from the hereditary *mahants*, who enjoyed the protective care of the then government. Mahatma Gandhi lauded the achievement as :

“First decisive battle of India’s freedom won. Congratulations.”

The contribution of the Sikhs to the freedom struggle forms a glorious chapter in its chronicles. Punjab was the last to be annexed by the British but the foremost to weaken the foreign domination as per an earlier observation of Mahatma Gandhi after the annual session of Indian National Congress held at Amritsar in December 1919.

“Plassey laid the foundation of British Empire. Amritsar has weakened it”. (1:71)

Hunger strike as a political tool often resorted to by Mahatma Gandhi was first effectively pursued by the Babbar Akali prisoners in April 1926. Their ordeal lasted six weeks. (3:177)

SOURCES

This paper is based on the extracts from my pamphlet “*Sikhism and its Impact on Indian Society*”.

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## REMEMBERING GURU HARGOBIND AND HIS INDOMITABLE DOCTRINE OF MIRI-PIRI

ONKAR SINGH\*

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Guru Hargobind, the sixth Sikh Guru, was much more than a spiritual prophet. He was a gifted man of action, who combined spiritual conviction with heroism, to set out the indomitable doctrine of Miri-Piri, a doctrine of faith in righteousness and human indomitability. And he triumphed in both.

Quintessentially, a holy man given to contemplation and prayers though, he came to destroy tyranny and establish peace. He had revolted at the Savage torture-to-death of his revered father, Guru Arjun Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, and an apostle of peace. The thought of the same thing happening again was unbearable. The people had to be protected from the grim challenge to their faith.

Guru Hargobind placed high value on tolerance, independence and freedom to practise one's faith. He braced himself to meet the challenge posed by the ruthless Mughal regime. Injustice and cruelty must be met with force. Oppression was unacceptable.

He conceptualised the authority of Miri (temporal) and Piri (spiritual), and decided to wear two swords; a sword of Shakti (power) and a sword of *Bhakti* (meditation). One was to smite the oppressor and the other was to protect the virtuous and innocent. It offered boost to help the Sikhs handle any threat. Now, they were to arm themselves as they were most exposed to dangers of persecution and oppression.

Guru Hargobind had an unequivocal commitment to spur social change and build up the morale of the people to be courageous. He encouraged them to live an active life of fearlessness. Being a keen sportsman, he made them interested in horsemanship and hunting.

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An armed force of volunteers and vigorous youth was organized. It was primarily for self defence. His followers carried weapons, rode horses and took part in parades, displaying their valour and skills. They brought him gifts of horses and weapons. They would neither frighten anyone nor be afraid of anybody. This was their maxim. They grew increasingly aware of the need to protect themselves. No more did they believe in self-abnegation.

It was a turning point in Sikh polity. The concept of saint-soldier had taken shape. This new orientation to Sikh polity found its finest expression in Guru Hargobind's grandson, Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and the last Sikh Guru, who skillfully synergised the peaceful and saintly heritage of Guru Nanak, the founding prophet of the Sikh faith, with martial spirit. He created the Khalsa. It was a fraternity of the pure in spirit, unalloyed with any pretension of class or caste. It was dedicated to peace, harmony and the service of humanity, yet willing to dare and ready to die fighting for a righteous cause. It was a fight for self-defence and against religious intolerance and human oppression. It was never a war of aggression.

The shock of Guru Arjun Dev's martyrdom spurred Guru Hargobind to offer an effective challenge to the oppressive rulers of the country. He had to fight a number of battles with the militant Mughal forces. He won many battles because the cause was righteous. Every time he came out triumphant against heavy odds. His inspired men, fought bravely and convincingly to thwart the pernicious attacks though outnumbered by the well-equipped and huge hostile forces. Nevertheless, he felt overwhelmingly sad for those killed in the battlefield. He was equally concerned with welfare of the casualties from combat.

With a spiritual reformer's vision for the Sikhs, he laid particular stress on scriptures to be read with full understanding and meaning. He told them that anyone who could recite the Japji, (the celestial hymn of Guru Nanak) with undivided attention, devotion and understanding, would have his wish fulfilled. It inspired a great religious devotion in devotees.

It is ironical that the Mughal Emperor Jehangir, under whose orders Guru Arjun was brutally tortured to death, became friendly to Guru Hargobind. It is believed that the moment the king met Guru

Hargobind, after being summoned to Delhi, his youthful charm and holiness completely won him over. The King posed the question: "which religion is better, Hinduism or Islam?" The Guru replied quoting Kabir:

*God first created light; All men are born out of it,  
The whole world came out of a single spark.  
Who is good and who is bad; The creator is in the creation  
And the creation in the creator; He is everywhere.  
The clay is the same; The potter fashions various models.  
There is nothing wrong with the clay or the potter.  
God, the true, resides in all; Whatever happens is His doing...*

It impressed the king very much. He had been told that Guru Hargobind was a great sportsman. He invited the Guru to a tiger hunt. During the hunt, the king was attacked by a ferocious tiger. Suddenly, Guru Hargobind, riding a horse, pounced on the tiger, killing it with his sword. The king admired the way the Guru risked his life to save him.

Now, Guru Hargobind became a constant companion of the King. He would take the Guru along wherever he went. He accompanied the king to Agra, Kashmir, Amritsar and Lahore. At Amritsar, the king stayed as a guest of Guru Hargobind.

At agra, the the king was taken seriously ill. The royal physicians couldn't cure him. As tradition goes his astrologiers told him that as the malady was due to a conjunction of stars, it could only be remedied if a holy man was sent to the Gwalior Fort to offer prayers. Who could be holier than Guru Hargobind? The Guru readily agreed to move when requested to do so. At Gwalior, he found several princes detained in the fort. They lived in deplorable conditions. The Guru had their living conditions improved. They joined him in prayers.

Meanwhile, the king had completely recovered. But the Guru wouldn't leave the fort unless the detained princes were also released. Eventually, the king agreed. Guru Hargobind left the fort along with all the fifty two princes, who had been languishing there for years. The spot where Guru Hargobind stayed in the Gwalior fort is well known as *Bandi Chhor*, the liberator of the detainee.

As it transpired, one wealthy and resentful Chandu Shah had conspired, in league with the astrologers, to have Guru Hargobind sent to Gwalior to seek revenge for the alleged indignity suffered by



him due to the Guru's refusal to accept his daughter's hand. He even incited the Governor of the fort, Haridas to poison the Guru, not realizing that Haridas was an ardent devotee of the Guru.

When the king met Guru Hargobind in Delhi to thank him for prayers for his recovery, the Guru disabused the king's mind about the so called unfavourable conjunction of stars. He plainly told him about Chandu's villainy and also about his plotting the appalling torture of Guru Arjun. Perhaps, already aware of Chandu's perfidy, the king lost no time in handing over Chandu to the Guru whose escorts seized upon Chandu and paraded him in the streets of Delhi and Lahore where he met with verbal abuse and insults hurled at him. In Lahore, the violent locals beat him to death and threw his body into the river. When the Guru learnt about it, he prayed for Chandu to be pardoned for his crimes.

The miri piri authority conceptualised to meet the challenge of the times, is Guru Hargobind's distinctive contribution to the Sikh ethos. It infused a new religious fervour among the Sikhs, who got inspired to challenge the oppressor.

His other great contribution is the founding of Akal Takht (Throne of the Eternal) to be the seat of temporal authority. It's a famous shrine facing Harmandir Sahib (the Golden Temple). It has since become the seat of supreme authority in both religious and secular matters concerning the Sikhs who are enjoined to accept its decisions without demur.

The pristine glory and authority of the Akal Takht must be maintained, more so now with a vibrant Sikh global presence of 25 millions. This great institution, created by Guru Hargobind, has served as the fountain head of power in both political and religious matters concerning the valiant Sikh Panth. Unfortunately, its pristine status and position has suffered a setback in recent times.

The valuable suggestions made by well-known Sikh historian and author Dr Kharak Singh, in his keynote address, delivered at a seminar on Akal Takht, organized by the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh, in November 2006, need serious consideration for a meaningful action to strengthen the Akal Takht Sahib as the supreme authority of the Sikhs.

## THE SOUL OF FREEDOM

GAJINDAR SINGH\*

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A person's response to his environs and situations depends on the nature of his beliefs and relative evaluation of his circumstances. The barriers erected by the Hindu society for the 'untouchables,' crippled them and rendered them invalid, and it led to their backward slide over several millennia. At the same time, nothing may deter or blunt the urge in human beings to explore the field of knowledge. The brain of any human being is not rendered deficient by caste or class barriers which are artificial and unjustified, whatever the background from which a person comes, high or low, backward or emancipated, privileged or discarded and abandoned by the society, in the quest of absolute truth. And it was a false premise of caste on which the Hindu society was framed and stood fragmented. The myth of the lower castes originating from the feet of Brahma was sanctified by Vedic authority to deny a right to these miserable sections from raising their voice. That was the firm opinion of Guru Nanak. He stood equally against the ruling Muslim invaders' sophistry about their racial and religious superiority over the indigenous populace. Consequently, the behaviour pattern set by him for the Sikhs became the code of conduct of the new liberated souls.

There were always, in history, many so-called high-born too, who cringed and whined when confronted with adversity and vainly pleaded their inability to stand up for their rights and lived in a state of indignity in the face of repressions unleashed by the ruling class. They blamed their incapability on their circumstances and on caste considerations, community, place, time or lack of opportunity, thereby remaining stuck to the throttling rules of *varnashram*. Baba Banda Singh Bahadur was

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once approached by some Brahmins to seek his intervention in restoration of an abducted young bride by the local chief of their area. The response of the Sikh general was shocking to them as he wished, instead, to eliminate them! Why should a group of able-bodied youth cringe and whine in utter helplessness and stand abjectly while the culprit had, unhindered, carried their young woman to his harem with intentions to assail her modesty? Sensing their forlorn condition, however, he ordered his troops to chastise the local chief, to recover the bride, who was rescued and in the action the Nawab was killed.

The response of the high spirited followers of Banda was neither the result of their racial pride nor the vengeful bitterness of the long lease of subjugation under the heels of the marauders who ruled over them. It was the new wave of confidence in themselves and their right to freedom and their ability to cope with any situation howsoever grave and grim. The soul had been stirred during the Guru period for over two hundred and thirty years, and it was on a test-run in the early post-Guru era.

It was not always a cake-walk, as history was to prove. The point to note is that this high-flying bonhomie and altruism remained fixed in the Sikh psyche and did not get diluted in adverse situations which were to be their lot, time and again, with regularity, from their inception till the present times. It is hoped that this positive determination will also continue to exert itself on their character in the future as well. The so-called unprivileged lot, abandoned by the Hindus as well as the Muslims alike as the scum of society, barely existed on the periphery of the social order as good-for-nothing outcastes. Can we just marvel at this living miracle of their transformation by Guru Nanak, of their emancipation and his rejection of the theory of any particular genetic aptitude of races and their habit patterns? These people were finally absorbed in the main body of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh, notwithstanding the protests and criticism of the high caste bigots who were asked by the tenth Master to leave the assembly if they objected to their inclusion into the main body of Sikhism. It was in line with the road-map defined by the earlier Gurus in their *bani* preserved in the Guru Granth Sahib:

*The velocity of storms extinguishes not the flame,  
It remains as steady and firm as the seat of authority.*

*Khatris, Brahmins, Sudras or the Vaish castes and  
 All others who are extensive and not countable,  
 Whoever lights the lamp (of supreme knowledge),  
 O Nanak, he will surely reach the destination.<sup>1</sup>*

Guru Granth Sahib, p. 878

Thus, Guru Nanak unambiguously tore away the much hyped *varnasbham* principle of the Vedic religion from its roots as well as the equally inhibiting theory of a chosen people of the Muslim ideology and other Semitic schools of thought, the myth of the privileged classes and the believers versus the pagans. The basic stipulation of Guru Nanak's creed was the admissibility of one and all, without any reservation or pre-condition, to light the glow of flame of knowledge in anyone willing to follow his path. The superiority of caste and clan was rendered irrelevant. With this one stroke Guru Nanak redeemed the bonded souls to freedom and a life of dignity.

The above doctrine was soon put to test successfully, when not only in triumph, but in adversity too, the new adherents withstood all possible horrors when publicly put to death, with a mystical smile on their lips along with Baba Banda Singh Bahadur at Delhi, which paved the trend of further blood-curdling tortures, for over half a century with the state proclamations, more than once, of total annihilation of the Sikhs. Unfortunately, the same bias and the policy of repression and atrocities continue to be piled at them. The resentment against the Sikhs has a pattern. It is their ideology of the futility of the *varnasbham* and their allowing equality of the lowly people with the high castes which was opposed tooth and nail by the Hindus. The maxims infused by Guru Nanak and his successor Gurus, their craving for freedom from the shackles and restrictions imposed by the old beliefs and affirmation of their self-confidence are basic postulates in the Sikh character. The Hindus opposed the process right from the times of Guru Nanak whether it was because of Lalo, the poor carpenter, whom he preferred over the caste conscious rich merchant or his staying with the *vanjaras* in the course of his travels, his mixing with the Muslim *pirs* and *fakirs*, his renunciation of the orthodox Hindu customs and rites. Ironically, these protests were constantly forwarded to the governments of the day, in spite of the highly biased, unsympathetic attitude of the Islamic state policies towards Hinduism.

Sikh heroism is not confined to a few well known names like Bhais Matidas, Satidas, Dyalaji, Mani Singh, Taru Singh and those martyrs who had attained spiritual ascendancy in their life time and were done to death in gruesome ways. It was a mass hypnotic wave which the Guru's word brought about which still continues to confound their aggressors. It is with just pride that the Sikhs regularly mention in each prayer, the supreme sacrifices so zealously undergone by those brave people to create a solid base of Sikhism with their blood and sinews, which has surprised sociologists and psychologists, because these diverse persons did not belong to one genetic faction, race or caste. There were the untouchables, the outcastes, lowest of the lowly mixed with the higher castes who participated in the cause. Whosoever partook of that experience was instantly transformed into a distinct character-group. Of such dare-devils, a race was born and a culture was established. The Sikhs have demonstrated time and again that all persons with grit and determination are eligible to join the Guru's ranks in equality. And anyone may discover that grit in him from selfless devotion.

*All four varnas attain salvation*

*By the refrain of One Name.*

*Guru Nanak imparts preaching,*

*Whoever hears it obtains deliverance.<sup>2</sup>*

Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1001

## II

That dividing humanity into all-encompassing, rigid, hereditary compartments of castes is an abiding blunder of Hinduism, is now acknowledged by the scholars the world over, even though the Hindus are not prepared, to date, to give it up and these restrictions continue to unreasonably plague their customs and traditions. The Islamic claim of equality and fraternity of the believers has not been translated into practice in India. Moreover, their inflexible belief about the irreversible doom reserved for those who remain outside the pale of the 'believers' is extremely prejudicial. The principle at work is the same as of the perpetrators of apartheid who segregated all people other than whites, holding them of inferior calibre. It cannot be termed a matter of Hindus alone as the problem has assumed international, multi-community dimensions.

The present-day Constitution of India representing the majority Hindu community's will, openly recognises this caste inequality and perpetuates it by futile but clever efforts at reservations by lowering of academic and service efficiency of the so-called weaker sections which perpetually damages and restricts the overall standards of their education, skill and initiative. In the existing mind frame of the high caste Hindus, this problem will not only be encouraged to persist but also keep the Hindu society sharply divided by class hatred and is bound to have its ramifications on other religious communities as well. Till the Hindus eschew the inviolability of the caste differentiation tied up with birth, the menace will spread to other communities. This faulty thesis is further complicated by inept handling of the reservation policy. Reservations in any case are no lasting solution as the ultimate partition of the sub-continent proved in 1947. In the case of the Hindu scheduled castes and tribes, continuing the State reservation policy ensures not only their permanent cleavage from the mainstream Hindu society, codifying strict social barriers but to maintain dominance over them by superiority of knowledge and skills, keeping them captive, perpetually inferior, mentally, technologically and psychologically by granting of special concessions in educational and technical standards. These concessions are not going to end at any time in the foreseeable future even where efficiency is attained by a member of the scheduled castes of the same or better calibre than the high castes. The sooner it is realised by the so-called scheduled castes, it will be to their advantage. Caste reservation was a deft move by the high caste Hindus to kill two birds with one stone.

Another sinister aspect of this scheme is to bind the lower castes to stay Hindu, otherwise the special privileges are stripped as they step outside the *Laxman Rekha* by conversion. In return, the caste Hindus have undertaken to extend protection to the low castes in the shape of reservation, irrespective of their drooping level of efficiency. In other words, it is freely admitted that inefficiency among them is inevitable due to their low caste status and the nation has to 'tolerate' their ineptitude and inefficiency of performance and skills. On the whole, it may not mean much in a big administrative set-up of the size of India, where time-job ratio is not seriously implemented and a weak link may be covered up by many surplus hands.

Low efficiency is not a biological defect of any one caste and class of people. It is also illogically assumed that this inherent right to all the privileges ceases to exist on mere change of religion. The misery piled on these wretched weaker castes for ages is erroneously supposed to melt away the instant one converts from the shackles of the tight caste system in a bid for freedom and emancipation.

The stigma of being dubbed scheduled caste/tribal does not wash away even on being successful economically and living in high middle-class comforts or the rich man's luxury. At the most, the caste Hindus may reluctantly socialise with them but that is the limit. The bear-hug of caste Hindus strangulates but does not assimilate them although pronounced in high pitched shouts of being part of the Hindu fraternity. The well-to-do among the scheduled castes and tribes continue to unabashedly corner all the benefits of their situation which elude their less active but more deserving members.

This caste division is enforced by the Indian constitution with strict vigil, so that a vast number of people, underfed and under-privileged, poor and below poverty line, are denied these concessions, if they are not in the ambit of the Hindu scheduled castes and tribes. In any civilised society, economically weak segments are the responsibility of the state and must be granted monetary assistance as well as special scholarships to come up in skill at par with the economically better placed classes. In India, it is a Catch-22 position, consequently, the rest of economic have-nots are left out in the cold. In case the sanctions granted to the Hindu low castes are extended to all economically weak segments, there is apprehension in the minds of the Hindus, of exodus of the exploited low castes to freely opt for better and more humane religious orders than Hinduism. Thus, a tightly covered can of worms is left to fester, denying millions of economically under-privileged citizens of this country equality with the acknowledged scheduled castes to a worse fate than the socially condemned criminals.

This defective perception of the basic problem lies in a myopic lack of vision of the caste Hindus who have been at the helm of affairs since the Independence of India. Simple matters of economic inequality have been blown up several times in order to apply surface dressing to the festering wound like distribution of subsidized rations

in the J&K State when the remedy lay in steady economic upliftment with the provision of infra-structure for steady jobs by industrialisation and similar window dressings in the North-eastern states which continued to grow like irremediable cancers.

### III

Our Gurus had an ideal solution to this jigsaw puzzle of the caste segregation and the bear hug in which the weaker castes are tightly squeezed. Firstly, the weak sections of the society must be treated at par, and given confidence of their ability to do as well as anyone else. We hear it said again and again that the Gurus spurned the offer of the caste Hindus to discard the weaker sections right from the days of Guru Nanak who drew the plan of action of Sikhism. He encouraged the workers and labourers over the high caste rich and influential. He chose his confidants like Bhai Buddha, a farmer, Bhai Lalo, a carpenter, Bhai Mardana, a mirasi, Kauda, the tribal and the lowly wherever he went.

*Lowest of the lowly and lower than them too,  
Nanak verily is with them; no truck with the rich and high,  
Where the lowly are cared for is the blessed place.<sup>3</sup>*

Guru Granth Sahib, p. 15

Guru Gobind Singh eulogised the weaker sections in his famous epistle:

*I am established due to their magnanimity,  
Otherwise there are millions of poor like me.<sup>4</sup>*

Those who were discarded as outcastes and beyond the pale of caste structure assumed command of the Guru's troops and inflicted crushing defeats on the twice born Rajputs and the Muslim *ghazis*. They were, spiritually, elevated to the highest ranks, and the Gurus honoured them by adding their *bani* in the *Adi Granth* which was appointed as the perpetual Master and guide of all Sikhs by Guru Gobind Singh. The Sikhs take pride in bowing to their sacred memory every day. Efficiency is generated by putting faith and trust in a person and not by doping him with helplessness and lack of self-confidence. It is a falsification to project a sizeable section of our people helpless and keep them invalid perpetually.

In the present scenario, the Hindus 'magnanimously' condescend to extend protection to the '*untouchables*' and the scheduled tribes by



financial grants and lowering standards in education and employment and call it a benign gesture. However, neither have they abolished the mechanism of *varna* classification giving perpetual edge to one class of people as superior to others, nor have they done much to uplift these wretches materially to be in the mainstream. Their patronising attitude ensures a permanent wedge between the high and the lower castes which will never be obliterated. The malady has widened to encourage other communities to press for similar privileges to their backward sections, including the Christians, Muslims and Buddhists, which religious tenets deny anyone being inferior to others. Recognising the permanency of the *varna* division is a handy political and religious weapon with which the Hindus create compelling circumstances to attract the weaker sections of other communities to embrace and enhance the Hindu fold. While they cry foul about conversions by others in offers of material gains, they themselves practise it unabashedly to lure ignorant masses with the constitutional sanctions provided for the *shuddhi* movement being practised openly for which there cannot be any antidote.

Instead of such exploitative steps, there is the time tested Sikh doctrine to abolish the *varna* distinctions, thereby mending the psychological gulf between castes, high and low, and demolish the barriers and complexes.

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## IMPLICATIONS OF HINDU SUCCESSION (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2005

SARDARA SINGH\*

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Sex ratio in Northern India is getting worse day by day. Child sex ratio in Punjab has fallen from 793 females per thousand males in 2001 to 776 in 2003, and in Haryana from 820 to 807 during this period. Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Bihar are the other states where the child sex ratio is worse and declining further according to an *Outlook* survey. This is happening in spite of the deterrent law that bans scanning for sex determination and foeticide. Government of India and state governments are adopting carrot and stick policies to stamp out female foeticide and empowering the girl child. Schemes like free education for girls, *shaguns* at marriage, insurance at birth, etc., are the incentives provided to encourage the parents not to abort the girl child but to bring them up gracefully. This year budget has made special provisions for the welfare and empowerment of women in India. But, all these programmes and efforts look pale before the amendment that has been made in the Hindu Succession Act, which would weaken the girl child and would increase the incidence of female foeticides.

Many a time the actions do not measure up to the intentions behind them. This is exactly what has happened in respect of Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005. The intention of the amendment is to empower the women and provide security to the girl child, but this enactment would result in exactly the opposite position whereby the girls will be put on a weak wicket. The society is fighting hard against foeticide, discrimination against the girl child, atrocities on brides and suicides, divorces and cruelties perpetrated on brides. 5

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Murders by dowry seekers are reported daily. Ironically, with this amendment, dowry has been unconsciously made obligatory under the provisions of the law. What is going to happen is that propertied people, specially the land-owning classes, will become more prone to committing foeticide of the girl child in order to save their properties and land from sub-division and moving to the girl's in-laws. There will be more pressure from the in-laws of the girls to sell their shares of parental properties and bring that money to themselves (i.e. girl's in-laws). This will lead to cruelty on unwilling brides and will increase the incidence of killing of the brides by greedy in-laws and suicides by frustrated brides, who may refuse to ask for division of parental properties out of strong bonds of love with their parents and brothers. If the bride agrees to get her share of ancestral property, this can be usurped by the in-laws and the bride is liable to be divorced afterwards out of greed for an other dowry. If the girl gets the ancestral property divided and takes away her share, brother-sister bonds will be shattered and, in times of difficulty or trouble created by the in-laws, the brothers and even parents may not come to the help and rescue of the girl.

Economically, it is a disastrous amendment. If the law operates in letter and spirit, every land holding will get subdivided and fragmented with passing of one generation and, more importantly, it will get located in two villages. With the passing of another generation, every land holding will get further fragmented in four villages, because in our society, the girls are not married in the same village. This will shatter the economy of the farm sector, and operational efficiency will be lost completely.

One wonders why our society places the in-laws of the girls in such a superior position. It is a hangover of the past when girls were kept illiterate and had to depend on their husbands and in-laws for their wherewithal and survival. Parents these days not only bring up the girl child until her maturity, but also educate her to the best of their ability and make her capable of handling the household affairs. These days, girls are educated to handle gainful employment with equal, if not better competence. Their parents spend as much as they can on their daughters' marriages and even give them dowry, often going beyond their resources. Many parents fall in debt due to these marriages. With all this personal and financial input and dowry, the girl goes to

the house of in-laws. The in-laws are the recipients throughout. They do not give any thing at any stage to the parents of the girl. Whatever they give to the girl, that too remains with their own family. Why and with what right then the in-laws of the girl consider themselves superior, or why does the society place them in superior position and why do they dominate? They do no favor or do any favor to the parents of the bride. One wonders, why the beggars should be calling the tunes all the time in our society. Our society has to change its value system in this respect.

The right amendment should have been that as soon as the girl is married, she should automatically become as much a partner in the property and wealth of her in-laws, as her husband. If they ever think of divorce, the bride should have the right to get the property of the in-laws divided and get her share. From this angle, we need to learn from the system of *Mehar* in Muslim marriages and of *Reet* in some tribal societies. We need to put some substance into our slogans like *Dulhan hi Dabej hai*. Otherwise, these are meaningless empty words and reflect hypocrisy, because we have made dowry a statutory obligation on the part of parents of girls through this amendment. Vowing by the girls and boys not to accept or give dowry sounds hollow in the presence of this amendment. Will the powers that be, think about it and save the Hindu Society and their girls from the depredations of this amendment, which weakens the women rather than empowering them in our society.

To be precise, this latest amendment, because of its consequential effects and implications, runs counter to the real intentions of the architects of this amendment – The unpowerment of the girl child.

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## DALIT POLITICS VS SIKH THOUGHT

RAGHBIR SINGH\*

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Division of Indian society in four sections on caste basis by Manu has for centuries played havoc with the Hindu psyche and Indian population in which the Brahmins as gurus, in league with Kshatryas as rulers, and to some extent the trading class Vaishas kept the fourth section Shudras (Dalits) literally under their thumb by denying them any human right including those concerning spiritual and economic progress. There is no denying the fact that Saints like Ravi Dass, Namdev and Kabir, etc., following their so-called menial class professions, to earn livelihood, still made astonishing spiritual progress, much better than the Brahmins in spite of very tough opposition from them. They dauntlessly confronted the Brahmins about their claim of being superior to the lower classes. In spite of all this, there was no end to their sufferings, till Guru Nanak Dev declared the concept of one God controlling the entire universe in which there was no place for any man-made distinctions of caste and creed, and that there was no one superior to the other, all were equal. His teachings were advocated by his successor Sikh Gurus and their followers from the last decade of 15th century to the end of 18th century. Sikh Thought, which soon became popular with the oppressed masses, was the rallying point for a large majority of Dalits and other down-trodden sections of the Indian society to struggle for their rights. They razed the mighty Mughal Empire to the ground, and after dismantling their *jagirdari* system, distributed the land amongst the landless people irrespective of any distinction. With their joint efforts, they established the secular Sikh *Raj*, proving the authenticity practical and character building aspects of the Sikh teachings.

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The British Colonial power defeated the Sikh forces and took over the administration of Punjab in 1845 in connivance with the remnants of Hindu Hill rajas, who had managed to sneak into the Sikh Raj to dilute the ethos of equality and fraternity which had been vehemently opposed by their elders, especially during the period of Guru Gobind Singh. During their administration, the British people had a tough time to deal with the steadfast Sikhs who would not allow the administration to interfere with their Gurdwaras propagating Sikh religion which was the only hope of the poor. To deal with the intrepid forces of the poor under the banner of Sikhs, they took advantage of the Hindu psyche of caste division and religious intolerance against other minority groups and, therefore, adopted the policy of further divide and rule under which the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were pitched against each other. Government of India Act, 1931 introduced reservations for these segments not only in legislature, but in some other spheres also by which they could damage the fabric of unity and equality woven by the Sikh Revolution. M.K. Gandhi, whose antecedents were mostly doubtful in the eyes of minorities, also came to the rescue of the British Administration when he persuaded Dr. Ambedkar not to adopt the Sikh way of life along with hundreds and thousands of low caste people. Not only this. He played fraud with the Dalits also by calling them 'Harijans' to keep them depressed socially and politically. Otherwise the opposition to colonial power would have gained much more momentum. The British, in league with rich sections of Congress and Muslim League, continued to play this game till 1947 when they found it difficult to curb the feelings of independence aroused in the people by the minority Sikh community who made more than 80% sacrifices to drive them out from India just as they had done in the case of Mughal Empire. They expressed their desire to hand over the power to Indian leaders representing the rich sections. These leaders immediately pounced upon that opportunity and Congress agreed to the formation of Pakistan which its leaders had earlier opposed vehemently declaring that this could be done only on their dead bodies. This led to the uprooting of the Sikhs from West Punjab where they had very good fertile lands for agriculture. This was the first blow inflicted on the Sikh community by the people who always thought Sikhs as a big hurdle in their style of administration.

based on caste division and oppression of the poor.

The votaries of division on caste basis thought Independence as a God-given gift to them to dismantle the unity amongst the poor brought about by the Sikh Thought of equality and fraternity. In order to continue with their agenda of perpetuation of division on caste basis which ran counter to and diluted the Sikh thought, they made reservations in various sectors for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Constitution adopted in 1952 initially for ten years. But it is still continuing. Thus they have legalized their scheme of division on caste basis. Even the ignorant and selfish Sikh leadership fell prey to this idea which later on led to such reservation in SGPC also which was basically at variance with the Sikh thought of a casteless society.

Did this reservation which continues even today after 54 years of independence ameliorate the lot of these castes and tribes? The answer is a big NO. A very small fringe of their population comprising their leaders and their relations has made the maximum use of this reservation. This has made them socially, economically and politically part of the ruling class. They have managed to give good education to their three generations who have come to occupy prestigious positions in the legislative, executive and judicial wings of the State. They live in urban areas enjoying all comforts of life. In spite of these reservations 95% of their population still continues to live a miserable life as they had lived before Partition as sweepers, farm labour, factory workers and doing other menial jobs without having any access to places of Hindu worship. Their children are uneducated, underfed, ill-clothed, and victims of fatal diseases.

Reservation is a ploy of this progeny of Manu who divided the society in four parts to keep them confined to the lowest fourth section of society exclusively meant for menial jobs. It is a matter of shame for the people who call themselves as leaders of the Sikhs to have connived with the *Manuvadis* in their clever game, which cuts at the very root of the teachings of Sikh Gurus. It is equally bad for the political leadership of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, who, ignoring the role of Sikh Gurus that they played in ameliorating their lot by giving them equal rights with others, have indirectly helped the *Manuvadis* to perpetuate this caste-based division by forming small social and political groups. Not content with this division, now the

game of reservation for backward and other backward classes among Vaishes is being played to keep the society further fragmented. The observation of the Supreme Court to keep away the creamy layer of these sections from the ambit of reservation has offended the entire ruling classes including even the Left parties who always claim to be the messiah of oppressed and suppressed classes. They are jointly thinking of passing a legislation by which they wish to keep the Supreme Court away from interfering with their game of ruling by division. To save the interests of the poor people, it is time for the well-meaning intellectuals of Sikhs, Dalits and other down-trodden people to purge their leadership of selfish people and come under the banner of time-tested Sikh Sidhant of equality and fraternity, and make a common front against this shrewd game of the ruling and well-to-do classes to keep the masses divided on caste basis.

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*The Lord mercifully unites with Himself those  
Within whose mind God's Name  
Enters and acquires an abode.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p. 30

ਕਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਮੇਲਾਇਅਨੁ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਵਸਿਆ ਮਨਿ ਆਇ ॥



## A SEWA MODEL FOR SIKH VOLUNTEERS – SIKH MISSIONARY COLLEGE, LUDHIANA –

GURBAKSH SINGH USA\*

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A set of pictures of some youth, before and after adopting Sikh *sroop* by them, are printed on the outside of the back cover of *Sikh Phulwari*, the monthly journal of the college; it touches the core of the heart of the readers, and they get interested to carefully study the contents of the journal. This is true index of the services rendered by the volunteers of the Missionary College to educate Sikhs regarding their great and glorious heritage. Their teachings motivate people to enjoy the honour of being practising Sikhs.

Regular readers know that the organizers are committed to preach the message of *gurbani*, the *Sarb Sanjhi* spirituality, compiled in Guru Granth Sahib. The editors strictly adhere to the Sikh Code of Conduct (*Sikh Rahit Maryada*) approved by the Khalsa Panth and published by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar. They sincerely and honestly preach it, without being influenced by so many modifications/changes adopted by some societies, organizations or scholars at their own level. Even some jealous individuals / organizations criticize the college to deflect them from their goal of educating the Sikh community on Panthic lines.

A look on the inside of the front cover gives a pleasant surprise, and provides great satisfaction to the readers. A Sikh interested in the glory of the Panth feels very optimistic to know the multifarious activities undertaken by them to serve the community, particularly the Sikh youth.

Because of the lack of committed preachers and good role models, even the born-Sikhs are straying away from the honour of

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being a visible and practising Sikh. Of course, this situation has developed partly because of the subtle anti-*gurmat* propaganda done by the enemies of the Sikh philosophy. However, inspite of such efforts to distort *gurmat* teachings and Sikh history, the message of *Gurbani*, is becoming more and more popular in the world every day. In response to such activities aiming to conceal the light of *gurmat*, the number of volunteers, cooperating with the Missionary College to spread the message of Sikh faith, is increasing every year. About 5000 volunteer Sikhs participate in their central annual function.

The 4-day annual gathering is held by turn in different cities/gurdwaras. To accommodate the large number of competitors for different sections, including *shabd vichar*, lectures, *keertan* in *gurbani ragas*, poetic recitations, etc., functions are held in more than one nearby gurdwaras simultaneously. Leading Sikh scholars and preachers of the Panth are also invited to participate in the annual gathering to explain *gurmat* and motivate the participating youth to adopt Sikh character.

### **SIKH PHULWARI MONTHLY JOURNAL**

Keeping in mind the nature of the contents and the number of volunteers popularizing the journal, there is no wonder that its readership for Punjabi and Hindi languages is more than 70,000 probably the maximum number among the Sikh religious journals.

In addition to the classical articles on Sikh heritage and Sikh philosophy, they publish the translation of a hymn about which scholars are not of the same opinion; they give the *gurmat* interpretation of the hymn to satisfy all the readers. Some Sikhs are interested in the journal to read the answers to the modern-day questions about Sikh heritage and philosophy, while others wait for the journal to know the pulse of the Sikh society, 'The Readers Write' section of their journal.

Also, the editors review the English journals and pick one best article, they think will interest their readers.

### **MISSIONARY TRAINING COLLEGES**

Four colleges are being run at Anandpur Sahib, Jalandhar (for girls only), Bareilly (UP), and Bhaur Saidan (Haryana). The trainees are taught according to the syllabus prescribed for *gurmat parcharaks*. It is a three year course and the students get diploma in *gurmat* studies. At present about 200 trainees are registered as full-time students. They

are provided free board & lodging. Some Sikh volunteers give regular contribution to finance these colleges. For their final practical training, the trainees participate in gurdwara functions in both villages and cities. So far hundreds of students who have passed from these colleges, are working in different gurdwaras in India and some have found jobs overseas.

### CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

The college runs a 2-year correspondence course teaching all aspects of the Sikh faith. It is upto the candidates how much time they take to complete the course, keeping in mind their other worldly duties. A couple of thousand students have passed this course; about 40 thousand students are registered and are at different levels of their study.

### GURMAT CLASSES

A very popular activity of the college is the holding of weekly *gurmat* classes in different towns and localities; 3-5 qualified and trained professors (volunteers) conduct the two-hour class according to the approved syllabus in *gurmat* philosophy, Sikh history and *gurbani*. Special lectures are arranged for the students, whenever an outside scholar visits the centre.

### PUBLICATIONS

In addition to their monthly journal, the college has published about 600 titles including tracts, most of them are printed repeatedly and are continuously revised to include the latest information on the topic. It is the heavy sale of their publications which is the main source of income for financing their activities and managing their offices; of course, to appreciate the services of the college, some Sikhs do contribute for publication of the literature for free distribution in the community. About one *lac* pamphlets, tracts and folders on different subject are distributed free every month directly to the houses of the individuals and to the *sangat* in village gurdwaras. The aim is to cover the entire population of the villages in Punjab and the regions around it. Most of the free literature is distributed by the students of the missionary colleges, who visit different villages and make door-to-door contact with the Sikhs. This project of personal contact with the

villagers awakened many families to get attracted to their roots and they rejoined the faith as formal Sikhs.

For correct reading and understanding the meaning of *gurbani*, special *gutkas* of *Nitnem* and *Sukhmani Sahib* are printed and made available for sale at all the circle office.

Literature stalls are run by the volunteers in some gurdwaras regularly and at other places on special occasions to provide low cost literature to the *sangat*. In many cities, they have their local offices with regular stock of books for sale.

### TEACHING THROUGH TESTING

Annual competitions are held among the youth. For the *gurmata* test, the candidates are grouped at four levels based on their age:

- i. upto fifth class
- ii. 6th to 8<sup>th</sup> class
- iii. 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> class
- iv. Above 10<sup>th</sup> class

The test material (books for the course) is provided to the students to study and prepare for the examination. Last time (2006), a very large number of youth 1,21,000 enrolled for the examination. The prizes are given to the top students and those who pass the examination with credit. Value of the prizes and books distributed in 2006 was to the tune of Rs 10 *lac*. Some Sikhs interested in exposing the youth to their unique heritage and impressed by this activity, contribute towards the prize money. This is a very effective way for encouraging youth to study and be proud of their faith.

### SOCIAL SERVICES

Without social services, these activities are not fully effective. Accordingly, library and dispensary facilities are provided in some schools. The needy students are supplied school needs; financial support to some students is also provided.

Free coaching for CET and PMT aspirants is also given at Chandigarh (Gurdwara Sector 34) by Professors from the University/Colleges. During summer vacation, *gurmata* and *keertan* classes are conducted in Chandigarh and nearby gurdwaras. About 3-4 thousand children take advantage of these facilities provided free to desirous students.

For matrimonial relations, facilities have been provided in the office at Chandigarh. They publish advertisements in the monthly journal *Sikh Phulwari*. The matter may be e-mailed or sent to them by post as well. The college holds special gatherings and arranges for *amrit* ceremony, thus admitting the desirous Sikhs to the Panth. Gurdwaras/schools may contact the principal for such services.

### FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

In view of the increased activities of the college, additional buildings have been planned. A partly-built 6.50 acre plot in Chanalon (near Kurali) was donated by an industrialist Sikh who was pleased with the achievements of the college. Also, plots have been purchased in Ludhiana, Mohali and Jalandhar; construction work for gurdwaracum-college facilities is going on in the three cities with the support of the well-wishers of the Panth.

We pray that God may grace their love for *sewa* and that they may continue to involve more and more people for learning and appreciating the Sikh heritage.

□

*Merit lies only in serving God.  
All other service and cunning  
Or feigned goodness are of no avail.  
Hold, therefore, to His Name,  
That alone will free you from your shackles.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p. 729

ਚਾਕਰੀਆ ਚੰਗਿਆਈਆ ਅਵਰ ਸਿਆਣਪ ਕਿਤੁ ॥  
ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮੁ ਸਮਾਲਿ ਤੂੰ ਬਧਾ ਛੁਟਹਿ ਜਿਤੁ ॥

## ISC : EDUCATION FUND FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

AMARJIT SINGH\*

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I was pleased to read in the Tribune of December 6, 2006 that the International Sikh Confederation (ISC) at its meeting held in Chandigarh approved unanimously to set up an education fund worth Rs 4,500 crore for giving "scholarships, incentives and other necessary support to Sikh youth to improve their education standards and make them fit for employment in the national and international companies". This is a very good decision and the ISC is to be applauded. I extend my congratulations for this decision and wish you all success.

The fact that Dr Gurcharan Singh Kalkat's son was unable to find a single employable boy from Punjab's countryside for the American company is proof enough, although the proof is already overwhelming, that education system, as it is, is not working. It seems clear that the education system will not achieve the necessary standards simply by doing more of the same order. A new approach is required.

In addition to giving scholarships and other support to Sikh Youths, the ISC could also look at the ways of improving the standards of teaching and learning, first in rural primary schools, and then expanding to include rural secondary schools. I have taken the liberty of making a few suggestions for raising such standards of achievement for children in all phases and settings at primary level based on my involvement in research on improving the quality of learning and teaching in both primary and secondary schools before my retirement from the University of Reading.

It is primary education which is the critical stage in children's development. It shapes them for life. Primary education gives children

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essential tools for learning, solving problems, being creative in writing, art, music and sports as well as developing their self-confidence as learners, and maturing them socially and emotionally.

For this, the goal of ISC for Primary Education could be to combine excellence in teaching with enjoyment of learning. "When children are excited and engaged, they learn better. What excites and engages them best is excellent teaching, which challenges them and shows them what they can do. When there is joy in what they are doing, they learn to love learning." (Former Secretary of State for Education and Work, UK, David Blunkett in 1999)

Thus, in order to achieve this goal, there is a need to develop policies and programmes which transform village primary schools in challenging circumstances.

The overall aim of such policies and programmes will be to raise standards of achievement for children in primary schools in all phases and settings. Specifically, this will involve improving the quality of teaching and learning, and the effectiveness of the management and leadership of schools in order to deliver the best possible outcomes for learners.

### DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY DOCUMENTS

In collaboration with educationalists, social scientists, head teachers, teachers, SGPC educationists, university teachers of Mathematics, Punjabi, English, Science and other specialists, the ISC could firstly develop policy documents focusing on:

1. The production of a useful and acceptable set of recommendations for planning, managing and coordinating the teaching and learning activities for pupils aged 5-11, and for devising key objectives and planning grids which would assist teaching staff in rural primary schools to teach their subject lessons (Punjabi, Mathematics, Science, English and other subjects) as outlined in the grids;
2. The production of proposals such as the provision and suggested delivery of in-service training, the nomination of a teacher within each school as a coordinator for each subject and continuous support within and outside the school. The purpose of training is to provide teachers with sufficient understanding and knowledge to make professional sense of the demands for change being made

- on them, and sufficient support to enable them to step beyond understanding into action in their schools. This is not easy, for, schools as organisations are often resistant to change, and teachers as individuals are often full of inconsistencies between their educational philosophy and their practice;
3. The agreed outcomes of teaching and learning, as set out by the working party in Punjabi, Mathematics, Science, English and other subjects. Eighty percent of all pupils in their last year of schooling in the primary school should achieve the level set out in the proposed document;
  4. A framework for learning and teaching for primary years, which assists teachers in helping pupils improve their performance in a progressive developmental manner and identifying critical stages;
  5. The production of training programmes for head teachers responsible for managing change in schools. Little can be achieved without the active support of those with power to make key decisions. In addition, it enables the head teacher, at whatever stage of their development, to reflect on their role and impact, and to determine how they will develop collectively;
  6. Suggestions on how to teach various subjects across the school curriculum;
  7. Suggestions on teaching personal, social and health education (PSHE) to help children develop their personal, social and emotional skills. These skills are vital in today's work force, where the ability to communicate, integrate and engage is essential. These are the skills which private sectors increasingly look for first;
  8. Suggestions for improving the physical environment of the school (e.g., building, furniture, equipments, play ground, etc);
  9. Development of a whole school policy for Healthy eating;
  10. A schools programme of support for school improvement. It outlines funding and additional human resources available to schools for developing the leadership capacity, running in-service training for teachers, appointing a teacher of English in participating schools in order to improve the quality of learning and teaching, and to raise further children's progress and attainment.

In addition, the ISC could develop plans to give the brightest and



underachieving pupils extra lessons paid for by the ISC. These lessons can be given at weekend and summer schools at universities and out of hour tuition. The rural schools should prove that they can stretch themselves and challenge the reputation of schools in urban areas for being better at doing so. The brightest pupils could attend extra English or start French lessons in summer schools or on Saturdays. Such summer and weekend schools for late developers and underachievers, because of social disadvantage, will enable them to improve their attainment and narrow the attainment gaps between them and their counterparts. Local rich individuals could be approached to make their cash donations to local schools, matched by the ISC. These funds can be used to support extra tuitions to underachievers.

This should not be a finished or definitive document, but a source of suggestions for individual schools wishing to develop their own initiative appropriate to their pupil's level of ability, but keeping the target set by the working party in view.

Once such policies have been developed, a five year trial demonstration project (perhaps named Excellence in Village Primary Schools) needs to be set up in 10-12 Khalsa primary schools which are currently managed by a local body or by SGPC in a rural area from one district of Punjab with the primary aim of implementing and evaluating these policies and programmes of good practice in primary education. The intention will be that these policies should focus on improving management and coordination of teaching and learning in primary village schools, aiming to demonstrate that, with the right support, almost all children can reach age appropriate levels of literacy in Punjabi and English, Mathematics, Science, Information Technology by the end of primary schooling.

The results of the study could then be used as a basis for making recommendations about how such policies can be implemented effectively and economically by other primary schools in rural areas and will have the following outs:

1. A written policy (or policies) of good practice of teaching in primary schools to act as a model for all primary schools;
2. A description in report form of the implementation process to show how such a policy can effectively and economically be implemented by schools;

3. A report or reports describing the research evidence on the relationship between the policies as implemented in trial schools, programme adoption and operating costs and pupils' progress and attainment.

In conclusion, the aim of schools should be to turn out rounded, socially adept pupils and not just focus on the academic. Time should be spent on children doing sports, music and drama. This helps children develop not just academic and vocational skills but social skills, confidence and team working as well. There is a need to teach young rural people vital attributes such as teamwork and communication skills, which are increasingly important in the job market.

What we need is to transform the delivery of education so that every pupil has the opportunity to reach his or her true potential. We need an excellent education system offering education opportunities to all children in rural areas. Education should be seen to be about merit, ability and talent, and to be for everyone and not exclusively for elites getting better opportunities than others. What is going to give people higher standards of living is going to be education. So education should be the priority; it should have pride of place. Everybody knows that in order to face world-class competition whether it's in America or whether it's in Asia, we need to do much better in our schools.

There should therefore be a shared determination between the pilot schools, local settings, district education department and ISC that all children are appropriately supported to make the progress of which they are capable.

Our village children deserve appropriate learning challenges, to be taught well and given the opportunity to learn in ways that maximize their chances of success and to have adults working with them to tackle the specific barriers to progress they face. The proposed policies for primary education in village schools need to be designed to help educationists, teachers and schools achieve this ambition.

## ON THE ISC FRONT

KARTAR SINGH\*

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### PROMINENT DELHI SIKHS JOIN ISC

On 6<sup>th</sup> Jan, 07 Sardar Harvinder Singh Phoolka, an eminent lawyer of the Supreme Court visited the ISC HQ. We had arranged for him to address about fifty of our members and he narrated to us his valiant efforts to obtain justice for the Sikh widows of the infamous 1984 riots.

S H S Phoolka spoke for about one hour and narrated the difficulties posed by various individuals in his fight for justice for these widows. He described the obstacles placed by Government agencies and also the threats posed to genuine witnesses to intimidate them from giving evidence before various commissions of enquiry. It was indeed a pathetic story, which brought before us the need for us to unite and fight for our democratic rights and the preservation of our faith. The ISC fully supports S H S Phoolka and his colleagues in their valiant legal battle to obtain justice for the victims of the 1984 riots.

— As a follow up of S H S Phoolka's visit and our decision to work unitedly with the efforts of the Delhi Sikhs, ten eminent Sikhs from all walks of life in Delhi have become our members. We are indeed honored to welcome them to our fold. S Patwant Singh Ji, a noted author, thinker and activist in Sikh affairs has also joined us in our noble mission. The very respected Gyan Seva Trust with S. Patwant Singh as Patron and S H S Phoolka as President has been enrolled on our list of organizations / Institutions. This Trust has already launched itself into the uplift of rural education in Punjab. It's coaching schemes for upcoming and bright rural students of the XI and XII classes, to

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enable them to compete in various entrance examinations, have already started showing praise-worthy results. They have focused their efforts in the Nawahshahr and Khadoor Sahib areas. The ISC will fully support and supplement the efforts of the Gyan Seva Trust as we realise the enormity of this problem. We would like our organization to cover other areas of Punjab.

### VISITS BY SIKH DIGNITARIES

The ISC was honoured to welcome amongst members two very well known personalities in S. Jatinder Singh Uppal from Melbourne, Australia and S. Raghbir Singh Bassi, an NRI from Kharodi village. Both are totally dedicated in their efforts towards the uplift of rural Punjab in the spheres of education and village uplift.

- (a) Sardar Jatinder Singh Uppal heads the noted Charitable Trust "SIKHS HELPING SIKHS". He is in India to help needy Sikhs with particular reference to Education in Rural Areas. Has already done considerable work in this sphere directly as well as through the "Gyan Seva" Trust based in Delhi.
- (b) Sardar Raghbir Singh Bassi Belongs to Village Kharodi in Distt Hoshiarpur near Mahilpur. Migrated to USA years ago and attained a high status both educationally and financially. Has returned to India to assist in improving village living in Punjab. Has made his own village Kharodi, a model in respect of sanitation, electricity, roads, pucca galis and cleanliness. This village was visited by President of India recently. Has already completed the modernization of eight model villages in Doaba and has set his sight on ten more. Is also assisting the Gyan Seva Trust towards Education.

Our guests were sponsored by S H S Phoolka who also attended our meeting. Dr Kharak Singh and myself fully briefed the guests about the organization and mission of the ISC. We outlined briefly our activities to date with particular reference to education in rural areas, our projects in Religious affairs and our Media project wherein we look forward to their support in setting up an exclusive TV Channel devoted to Sikh culture and ethos.

### S JATINDER SINGH UPPAL'S MISSION

Having succeeded in setting up a flourishing business in Australia,

this noble Sikh prayed daily for the Guru to grant him the ability to lift the lives of needy Sikhs with just one action. One visit to Sri Darbar Sahib Amritsar gave him enlightenment. He established his Trust "Sikhs Helping Sikhs" (SHS) in 1997. In 2001 he met Dr Manmohan Singh, Sardar Sarna and S H S Phoolka for one hour and sought their advice on what to do. There was help in that he got a suitable working space in a Connaught Place building. His mission was planned here and by 2004 he was well on his way. By now, he has distributed 50,000 books all over the Sikh World. He described his SHS Trust as working on the lines of the Church of England. Sardar Uppal stressed the importance of 'dasaund' by each Sikh; he has published and distributed 35,000 copies of 'Nitnam' and three other books on Sikhism. He has found sponsors for needy Sikhs in Australia through Gurdwaras. He wishes to do a lot of work in Punjab. His experience in Amritsar proved to him that girls have been given a backseat in all spheres of life amongst Sikhs. There were very few girls in the orphanage. On the vanishing identity problem amongst Sikhs, he has a lot to say. He feels that the young generation must be truly motivated by making them aware about our religion through recitation of *Sakhis* and stories of the sacrifices made by our Gurus and their disciples. In this direction, he has distributed 2000 sets of Sikh literature. S. Jasmininder Singh Jassi has contributed Rs. 20 lakhs towards this project.

In a follow-up meeting with Dr Kharak Singh, Lt Gen Kartar Singh, Dr S S Johl, Dr Gurcharn Singh Kalkat, Bibi Baljit Kaur, Dr Gurbaksh Singh and S. Gurpreet Singh (all members of the Interim Executive Committee), we proposed a two year project to intensively coach about 500 bright rural students of Punjab to compete in various entrance examination for entry into various elite streams/professions. Sardar Uppal agreed to sponsor this project to the extent of Rupees Twenty Five Lakhs per year for two years. This was indeed gracious of him and the ISC gladly accepted his kind offer.

#### **DR RAGHBIR SINGH BASSI'S MISSION**

This true son of the soil is here to stay and bring about a turnaround in the living standard of villages in Punjab. He pointed out a big 'Schism' in the thought process of Punjabis, i.e., we depend upon the Government to do everything for us. He has gauged that

Government planned infrastructure projects never filter down to villages. The poverty gap is increasing, and in spite of the Government's efforts, villages have not even had a glimpse of the so-called rise in our standard of living. If this divide cannot be bridged by Government efforts, NGO's must rush in as Sardar Bassi has done. He has started at the bottom and moved upwards in each of his ventures. He advises us that we need to tackle the basic problems of water, sanitation, preventive health and education simultaneously.

Sardar Bassi stressed the need to make young children computer friendly. Let them awaken to the progress being made by urbanites and they will seek education. He has not found this easy to implement, because he feels that villages in India suffer from a "Dependence Syndrome". Leadership is lacking. Government is doing very little and they must learn to stand on their own feet. Only money cannot solve their problem. Make them aware and alert and they must help themselves. He felt that once we do this the Government will be compelled to co-operate. He has received the support of the Chief Secretary, the DCs and Panchayats in his entire venture after he achieved the awakening of villages themselves.

Sardar Bassi feels that the ISC could join him in his efforts in a big way as we have a galaxy of qualified members who can form a very big work force to motivate the villagers in our rural areas.

### **OUR APPEAL TO OUR ESTEEMED READERS**

We at the ISC have in just one year, with a shoe-string Budget, established this progressive organization which represents Gursikhs from all corners of the globe. We have formulated projects through our Five Advisory Councils. These will naturally need an appropriate financial outlay. We need to build a proper corpus fund so that a sustained effort is launched to achieve an overall uplift of the Sikh community in Education, Rural uplift, Religious Renaissance and Youth Guidance. We also must be represented strongly in various world organizations.

### **OUR URGENT NEEDS**

We hereby humbly appeal to all Sikhs of the world to help us raise the "Guru Nanak Education Fund" to a Billion Dollar target. This will ensure that NO aspiring young Sikh is prevented from

reaching the summit of his career due to lack of funds. Let our youth fan out in various professions and specialities and achieve outstanding positions while they are young. Let mankind recognize the Sikhs as a brilliant *Qaum*, known not only for their valour in the battlefield, but also in the various other spheres such as the Sciences, Fine Arts, Sports and all literary spheres.

We also urgently need to get our own TV Channel going. I reproduce again our Resolution in this regard. This should inspire you to contribute liberally towards this fund separately so that we are able to communicate with the whole Sikh *Jagat* at the earliest.

### RESOLUTION

“The Interim Executive Committee and eminent members present at its meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> Dec, 2006, hereby resolve that the ISC work towards establishment of an independent TV Channel in the very near future,. This will enable the ISC to communicate directly the Sikh ethos, Sikh way of life and literature, history and the sacred contents of Guru Granth Sahib globally. This will also enable us to inculcate in Sikh youth the importance of maintaining our distinct identity and acquaint them with the history of the sacrifices made by our Gurus and predecessors to uphold the tenets of Sikh faith. The ISC may seek the help of sponsors to finance this project, provided ownership rights of this channel remain with the ISC.”

WE APPEAL TO ONE AND EVERY SIKH IN THIS WIDE WORLD TO CONTRIBUTE WHATEVER HE/SHE CAN AFFORD TOWARDS THE EDUCATION AND TV CHANNEL FUNDS OF THE ISC.

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## ABSTRACTS

### THE SIKHS AND TRANSFER OF POWER (1942-47)

AN ABSTRACT BY KHARAK SINGH

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*Author : Dr Kirpal Singh*

*Publisher : Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala*

*Pages : 174; Price : Rs 180/-*

The book deals with the developments during the crucial period 1942-1947, which led to the division of India and creation of Pakistan and the Indian Union to inherit power from the outgoing British who had been ruling over the Indian sub-continent for the previous two centuries. It seems the British had realized that it would not be possible for them to stay on in India as rulers after the World War II, in which they were engaged as a leading ally. Therefore, even before the cessation of hostilities in 1945, when the labour government came to power in Britain, they started negotiations with the Indian leaders through Sir Stafford Cripps mission, which were continued through the Cabinet Mission led by Lord Pethic Lawrence.

According to Cabinet Mission Plan which detailed concrete proposals for transfer of power in India, three contenders for power were recognized, viz, the Muslims, the Sikhs and the Others which included all those who were not Muslims or Sikhs. With this clear recognition, it was expected that the resultant formula for the transfer of power would be satisfactory to the Sikhs also, particularly because the Punjab had belonged to the Sikhs, before the British annexed it. But the result, as we all know now, could not be more disastrous for the Sikhs. Muslims got what they wanted, viz Pakistan, and the others (read Hindus) got rest of the Indian sub-continent, the Sikhs got only ruins. The area which constituted their homeland and where they were the major property holders, was partitioned, the Sikhs thrown at



the mercy of hostile elements, with no protection whatsoever. No safeguards were provided for the minority communities on either side of the border. There was no provision for exchange of population or property.

According to the author, "The bifurcation of Punjab was followed by unprecedented massacre of about half a million people, abduction of women and children on a very large scale, uprooting of about ten million people on both sides of the border resulting in enforced migration and exchange of population. The Sikhs suffered the most in this holocaust and the onset of freedom left them downcast and humbled."

The question that continues to bother Sikhs and their well-wishers, is why the Sikhs who occupied a position of unique importance in the Punjab before 1947, and had been recognized as one of the three major communities in India for the purpose of transfer of power, could not secure a better deal.

The above question is not easy to answer. However, in the book under review, Dr Kirpal Singh has given an excellent narration of the events that led to the partition of India and the disaster for Sikhs, leaving the readers to draw their own conclusions. In the Introduction, he gives the relevant background which prepares the stage for the subsequent drama.

The author reproduces the Muslim League resolution of 1940 passed at Lahore, which is the *Magna Carta* of Pakistan, demanding that geographically contiguous Muslim majority units be grouped to constitute independent state in which the constituent units should be autonomous. Punjab being a Muslim majority province was proposed to be included in the Muslim state. The Sikhs considered Punjab to be their homeland, and had very bitter memories of the Islamic rule. Sir Sunder Singh Majithia, a Minister in the Unionist Government of British Punjab and a veteran Sikh leader, was the first Sikh leader to condemn the Pakistan Scheme. He said, "Muslim League has created a situation which may seem a parting of ways for the Sikhs and the Muslims... It would be the height of audacity for anyone to imagine that the Sikhs would tolerate for a single day the undivided communal Raj of any community in the Punjab which is not only their homeland, but also their holy land."

To give an idea of the situation, Sir Malcolm Darling is quoted, "Nowhere is communal feeling potentially so dangerous because of the Punjab's virile and hot headed people, and complicated because there is third and not less obstinate party, the Sikhs; who were more closely knit together than either Hindus or Muslims, fiercer too and prouder and more dynamic. They never forgot that it was from them we conquered Punjab". In this connection, the views of Mr Robert Needham Gist, quoted by the author are also worth reproduction. He refers to the rich tract which lies between the rivers Chenab and Beas, the original Sikh land, the cradle of the Sikh faith and the nursery of the Chivalry of the followers of the Gurus. He goes on to suggest that the proper name by which this land ought to be known, is the 'Sikh land, or the land of Baba Nanak'.

Chapter 2 deals with the Cripps Mission of 1942, which marked the beginning of negotiations for transfer of power. The draft proposal gave the right to the provinces of British India to secede from the centre and acquire the same full status as the Indian Union. This according to Maulana Azad meant 'opening the door to separation'. Lumby says that this was both recognition of the strength of the demand for Pakistan and a long step towards its ultimate realization. This greatly alarmed the Sikhs, because Punjab being a Muslim majority province, could secede from the centre, subjecting the Sikhs and Hindus to perpetual Muslim domination. Sikh leaders, Master Tara Singh, Baldev Singh, Ujjal Singh and Sir Jogindra Singh, met Sir Stafford Cripps on the 27<sup>th</sup> March, 1942, to express their apprehension, and later submitted a memorandum on 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1942, suggesting redistribution of Punjab into two provinces with river Ravi forming the boundary between them. In this way, the two eastern Division of Ambala and Jalandhar plus the three central districts of Lahore, Gurdaspur and Amritsar would have a population with non-Muslims forming 63% and Muslims 37%. In this area, although the Sikhs would not be in a majority, but they would hold the balance of power.

The Cripps Mission was a failure. No Indian political party accepted it, but the draft proposal implied acceptance of Pakistan demand by the British.

#### **SIMLA CONFERENCE**

The next landmark in the series of negotiations was the Simla Conference. Its various sessions were held from 25<sup>th</sup> June to 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1945. On the initiative of the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, leaders of major political parties and premiers of provincial governments were the invitees. Mahatma Gandhi and Mr Jinnah were recognized as the leaders of the two major political parties. Master Tara Singh represented the Sikhs.

There was difference of opinion between the Congress and the Muslims regarding selection of members for the Viceroy's Executive Council. The Viceroy, therefore, suggested that all parties could submit a list of persons for inclusion in the Executive Council, so that he could select persons acceptable to all. The Congress was to propose 8-12 names, Muslim League 4, and the Scheduled Castes and Sikhs 3 names each. The deliberations of the Conference and the list of names, ultimately were later used in the formation of Executive Council in 1946, which was popularly known as the Interim Government. It must be noted, however, that the list of Sikhs contained only one name, 'Tara Singh', written thrice in stead of the required three different names.

However, it was not acceptable to the Viceroy, and Sardar Baldev Singh was selected much against the wishes of Master Tara Singh and the Shiromani Akali Dal. Master Tara Singh registered a mild protest which was ignored by the Viceroy.

### THE CABINET MISSION PLAN

Soon after coming into power, Prime Minister Attlee sent a Mission to India consisting of three members of the Cabinet – Lord Pethick Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and A V Alexander. After coming to India, they held discussions with various political parties and declared on the 16<sup>th</sup> May, 1946, their proposals which is known as Cabinet Mission Plan. The short-term arrangement envisaged the formation of an interim government consisting of all the political parties. It was to have equal members of the Congress and the Muslim League, and other minorities like Sikhs, Christians, etc., were to be separately represented. According to the long term arrangements, the Constituent Assembly was to be established with the following compulsory grouping for making constitution of free India:

Section 'A' : Consisting of Madras, Bombay, Uttar Pardash, Bihar, the Central Provinces and Orissa.

Section 'B' : Consisting of Punjab, the North Western Frontier Provinces, Sindh and British Baluchistan.

Section 'C' : Consisting of Bengal and Assam.

In the section B, the Muslim representatives were 22, Hindu 9 and the Sikhs 4.

The Sikhs vigorously protested against this proposal. In a memorandum submitted to the Cabinet Mission, Master Tara Singh argued: "Before the Mission arrives at a decision on the question (constitution making) we would emphasise that the Sikhs have as good a claim for creation of a separate sovereign state as Muslims for Pakistan, and the Mission would not concede the claim for Pakistan without conceding at the same time the claim for separate state made on behalf of the Sikhs."

The proposals of the Cabinet Mission was rejected by the Congress and the Muslim League, although for different reason.

The Cabinet Mission had thus failed. However, Lord Wavell, the Viceroy decided to go ahead with the formation of the Interim Government. The Muslim League at first refused to join the Interim Government in the hope that this would keep out the Congress. When, however, the Governor-General invited Mr Nehru to form the Government, it was greatly upset. After some time, it also decided to join the government. However, it soon became apparent that it had joined to obstruct its functioning. According to Lord Claydesmuir, who officiated as Governor General during May 1947, "the relations between Hindus and Muslim (members of the Government) had almost reached the breaking point. At centre there was a joint Cabinet in name only."

Under the circumstances, the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, realized that a new approach was needed. He proposed British withdrawal from India in a phased manner, so that the southern provinces would first be handed over, and the northern provinces of India will be handed after a further short period. The whole process of withdrawal was to be completed not later than 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1948.

The Wavell plan left no doubt that the British were determined to quit India as early as possible, not later than 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1948, and

that India would have to be divided on communal lines. The British government was not prepared to wait that long. So Lord Wavell was replaced with Lord Mountbatten as Viceroy, who advanced the date of British departure to August 15, 1947. They failed to imagine the consequences of this haste, and did not make any arrangements for the safety of minorities on either side of the border. Penderal Moon Writes, "...if he (Lord Wavell) had been given freer hand, or if the British government had followed his advice and acted with firmness, and the decision he advocated, the transfer of power could be effected without the disaster that actually accompanied."

Malcolm Darling confirms this view. He observes: "The tragedy of Punjab could have been foreseen and we should not have handed over millions of helpless peasants for whose welfare we were responsible, to anarchy and ruins. Penderal Moon has rightly lamented, as to why the "ending of British Raj, which we have so long foreseen and so long proclaimed as our goal, should involve a last minute division of the country, the precipitately enforced migration of well over ten million people and casualties of the order of 2,00,000". He has described this as "a singular want of prevision and failure of statesmanship."

The working committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Panthic Pratinidhi Board jointly passed a resolution on the June 14, 1947 emphasising that, "In the absence of the provision of transfer of population and property the very purpose of partition would be defeated." An earlier resolution of Shiromani Akali Dal passed on April 16, 1947 states: "Shiromani Akali Dal demands that before transfer of power to Indian hands in June 1948 (which date was first fixed) the Punjab should be divided into two provinces. The Shiromani Akali Dal further demands that the facilities be provided for exchange of population and property."

Mountbatten paid scant attention towards Sikhs and always looked towards Mr Jinnah and Pandit Nehru for every proposal which was made in connection with the Sikhs. For instance, when the Sikhs demanded exchange of population, he referred this to Pandit Nehru and Mr Jinnah. The latter did not reply and Pandit Nehru's reply was evasive.

One significant development reported by the author in his book

needs to be reproduced: "Consequently, meetings between Mr Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan and the Maharaja of Patiala and Sardar Baldev Singh, the Defence Member of the Interim Govt, were arranged. Since the Sikhs had already put forth the demand for a Sikh state, the talks naturally centred on that issue. Mr Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan agreed to the formation of the Sikh state with its separate military establishment within Pakistan, provided the Sikhs did not insist on the partition of the Punjab and agreed to join Pakistan. The Sikh leaders demanded the right of opting out of Pakistan for the Sikh state to which the Muslim League leaders did not agree. Master Tara Singh told the writer that if Mr Jinnah had agreed, they would have negotiated with the Congress for better terms. It is difficult to visualize what better terms the Congress could have offered, short of creating an independent Sikh state in the portion of Punjab which fell to India's share.

Surprisingly, the Sikh leaders did not meet the Congress leaders to seek the kind of constitutional guarantees they had demanded from Mr Jinnah. The fate of the Sikhs was thus inevitably sealed as a part of the Hindu India. The author, however, feels:

"The Sikh leaders made the right choice in the long run. Keeping in view their culture, history and past traditions, which were more akin to the Indian tradition than to Islamic tradition, they opted to link their destinies with India. Joining Pakistan by the Sikhs would have been just like their joining hands with Ahmed Shah Abdali to build an Afghan kingdom in the Punjab, which, according to Rattan Singh Bhangoo, the immortal author of the *Panth Parkash*, was mingling fire with gun-powder."

Lord Mountbatten announced his plan on June 3, 1947, laying guidelines for partition of the Punjab. Lahore, Rawalpindi and Multan Divisions were declared as Muslim majority areas. A boundary commission was to be set up to draw the dividing line.

"Giani Kartar Singh, President of Shiromani Akali Dal said on June 16, 1947, "The Sikhs will not rest contented till the boundary line is demarcated in such a way that it leaves at least 85 per cent Sikhs in India and both the states of Pakistan and India are committed to facilitate the migration of the remaining 15 per cent Sikh population from Pakistan to India."

The book gives a detailed account of the developments related to the demarcation of the boundary and the unsuccessful efforts made to save Nanakana Sahib and other gurdwaras in the adjoining areas, as also to seek an orderly exchange of populations. However, neither the Congress nor the Muslims listened. The British were in a haste to quit. So, the inevitable result was the worst riots ever witnessed in world history, enforced uprooting of population on an unprecedented scale accompanied by sufferings and mass killings of innocent people on both sides of the border. The author gives a vivid description of the holocaust that followed.

Sarar Baldev Singh, who had been included in the Interim Government against the wishes of Master Tara Singh and without approval of the Shiromani Akal Dal, played an unfortunate role. The author reports:

1. "Before supporting the 3rd June Plan, popularly known as Mountbatten Partition Plan, he did not consult Shiromani Akali Dal. Giani Kartar Singh who was President of Shiromani Akali Dal in 1947 complained about it to Evan Jenkins, the Governor of Punjab, during his interview with him."
2. "When Baldev Singh was called to London on December 6, 1946, alongwith Pt. Nehru, he did not consult Shiromani Akali Dal. Nor he discussed any proposal for safeguarding the interests of the Sikhs which could be presented there. Of course Pt. Nehru and Baldev Singh opposed the compulsory grouping of provinces in the Cabinet Mission Plan in the London Conference on 6th December."
3. "Major Short told me that Baldev Singh was invited by some members of the British Parliament to stay, in England to deliberate on the demands of the Sikhs. But he did not stay because Pt. Nehru persuaded him to accompany him to India where the Constituent Assembly was to be inaugurated on December 1946. On the other hand, Muslim League President Mr. Jinnah and its Secretary stayed there after 6th December 1946 and organised a big dinner where all members of the British Parliament were invited and Mr. Jinnah made speech and pleaded for Pakistan. Lord Attlee had, however, advised his Cabinet colleagues not to attend this dinner party. No such effort was made by the Sikhs to

safeguard their interests or interest of Gurdwaras to be left in Pakistan or case of Sikh mass migration in case of Pakistan etc., etc.”

The author discloses that Sir Stafford Cripps proposed to Baldev Singh that the Sikhs should jointly present the Sikh case alongwith the Sikh States in order to strengthen their demand for Sikhs State. This intelligent suggestion should have been debated in the Sikh circles. Instead of giving full thought to this suggestion. Baldev Singh replied that Sikh State would be too small for them. They want to expand in the whole of India.

Another incident that merits attention of the reader is reproduced below:

“The Viceroy invited for dinner Maharaja of Patiala and Mr. Jinnah, President of Muslim League who subsequently became Governor General of Pakistan for dinner. Mr Jinnah was accompanied by Liaquat Ali Khan and Begum Liaquat Ali Khan. Late Maharaja Yadvinder Singh of Patiala writes about his meeting with Jinnah: “The talk started and offers were made by Mr. Jinnah for practically everything under the sun if I would agree to his plan. There were two aspects – one was based on the idea of Rajasthan and other for separate Sikh State – Punjab minus one or two districts in the south. I had prolonged talks with Master Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh and others Sikh leaders, and all the negotiations on behalf of the Sikhs were within my knowledge. I was to be Head of new Sikh state, the same as in Patiala. The Sikhs would have their own army and so on. I told Mr. Jinnah that I could not accept either of his two proposals.” It is significant to note why Maharaja Yadvinder Singh of Patiala refused the offer of Sikh State. He himself writes, “All these things sounded most attractive but I could not accept them being practical, and neither could I in the world that I was in, change my convictions.”

After giving detailed account of the fateful events related to the partition of the Punjab, the author *inter alia* concludes:

1. Mountbatten plan was hasty and unfortunate. Wavell plan was more realistic and could have averted the bloodshed and misery.
2. The leaders failed to anticipate the consequences of the policies



they had been following and to arrange orderly exchange of population which was inevitable.

3. The performance of Sikh leadership during the transfer of power cannot be termed very commendable either.

The book is a very authentic, faithful and objective record of the events that culminated in the partition of the Punjab and the country at the time of British departure from India. The author has drawn upon relevant official documents. He has actually verified the facts through personal interviews with the main actors in the sordid drama, which included highest authorities in the British government, the bureaucracy and the top leadership in India. Only a celebrated historian like Dr Kirpal Singh could do it. He is universally recognized authority on history of the partition of India and has already contributed several books on the subject. There is no doubt, his present remarkable contribution will go down as the most reliable and complete primary source of the history of the period.

We revert to the question raised in the beginning of this review — Why did the Sikhs get such a raw deal? For them it was no transfer of power. It was only loss of power, lives, hearths and homes, fertile lands and property. The misery which was at its height in 1947, has not ended. The account given by Dr Kirpal Singh yields valuable lessons: It confirms that mistakes committed in a moment lead centuries of suffering (*Lambhon ne khata ki, sadion ne saza pai*) while the British must be blamed for the indecent haste in quitting, and failure to ensure an orderly transfer of power, we must also share the blame for the consequences. Our leadership failed to see the coming events clearly. They reposed faith in those to whom faith is unknown. *Ham ne un se ki wafa ki umid, jo nabin jante wafa kia hai.*

It would be unfair to blame the leaders alone. It seems the Sikh intelligentsia did not take show sufficient interest either. The tendency still persists. They must show greater concern for the future of the community as well as the country, in a spirit of service and sacrifice.

I have no hesitation, in saying that the '*The Sikhs and Transfer of Power*' is a 'must read' book, not only for historians and students of history but for everyone.

## JEEVAN BRITANT – AKALI KAUR SINGH

AN ABSTRACT BY GURCHARAN SINGH\*

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*Author & Publisher : Bhagwant Attar Singh of Kashmir, # 47, Sec 19-A, Chandigarh*

*Pages 164, Edition 2005,*

*Price : Not mentioned*

Akali Kaur Singh Nihang was a unique personality among the Kashmiri Sikhs who spent his lifetime in service and *Sikhi parchar* in Kashmir, and later in Punjab and other parts of India. When after partition, the tribals attacked Kashmir, the Sikhs had to move out under harrowing circumstances. From that moment, to the end of his life, his sole passion was to resettle them against heavy odds.

He was born on 11<sup>th</sup> Phagan 1943 (1846 AD) in village Padhar, and was the eldest among the five sons and four daughters of Bhai Maha Singh and Mata Karam Kaur. He was named Puran Singh, which later at the time of his amrit initiation at Hazoor Sahib, was changed to "Kaur Singh". He adopted the Nihang way of life after that. That is why he was known as "Akali Kaur Singh Nihang".

From 1952 to 1958 BK (Bikrami Samvat), he studied *gurbani* under Baba Karam Singh and Jaswant Singh of Guru Har Sahai, became well-versed as "pathi", and started deep study of *gurbani*. When he was young, his father planned his marriage, but he went to his prospective father-in-law, and frankly told him that he would never stay at home and therefore his engagement should be withdrawn. But as both the families had promised, the marriage did take place on the Baisakhi of 1960 BK (1903 AD). In a few days time, he quietly left at night and went to Panja Sahib. There he met Bhai Ladha Singh who remained his friend for life. (Later, Bhai Ladha Singh became Hazuri

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\* # 142 Phase 4, Mohali

Raagi and Granthi in Faridkot). He then moved to Amritsar where he spent his time in meditation near Dukh Bhanjani Beri and is said to have acquired spiritual powers.

From here, he went to Hazur Sahib where he met Akali Hazura Singh, Head Granthi. Probably he partook Amrit there. He read a lot of books on Sanskrit and gurbani, and along with his associates became a 'Nibang'.

From then on, he became a wandering *parcharak*, and taught Gurmukhi and *Gurmat* to all. Because he was a strict disciplinarian, he insisted on *Rehat Maryada* and the *Kakars*, and dissuaded people from *manmat*. With his handsome face and unique dress, he always stood out, and was taken for a prince. The British secret service kept a watch on him.

When Singh Sabha Movement started, he did his *parchar* more vigorously. His opinion on *Gurmat* was always sought. In 1973 BK (1916 AD) he went to Afghanistan and taught true Sikhi spirit and initiated many into Singhs. Because sangats always remembered him, he kept on making trips for almost eleven years to various villages and touched even Kabul. On return to Lalpura, a *maulvi* incited Muslims to attack him and burn the gurdwara. But the *maulvi* and the crowd were so impressed with his eloquence and knowledge of Koran, that everyone cooled down and bowed before him.

Akali ji also toured Punjab, UP, CP, Maharashtra, Bihar, Bengal and Assam, and gave practical help to the Singh Sabha Movement. He was advisor to Chief Khalsa Diwan, and was deeply respected by Nihangs of Hazur Sahib. In every Panthic gathering, his advice was sought. He was offered the positions of Head Granthi, Harmandir Sahib and Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht, but he always declined. He also acted as arbitrator in disputes among various sects, parties, as he was considered unbiased and known for his dedicated life as a true Sikh.

Once in 1907-08, Bhai Wasakha Singh, Granthi of 14 Sikh regiment was dismissed at Ferozepur because he did not get up when some English officer entered the *diwan* (gathering). By his influence and argument, he had him reinstated.

Those days descendants of the Gurus, namely, Bedis and Sodhis, encouraged personal Gurudom, Akali ji always insisted on Parkash of Guru Granth Sahib and proper respect to the eternal Guru. He was a

stickler for proper observation of routine in *Keertan*, *path*, *ardas*, and *rehat*, and boldly pointed out omissions, and corrected the same regardless of whosoever was involved.

He used his influence with Kashmir members for proper representation to Sikhs in government jobs. In elections, he supported only good persons of high calibre. After the attack of tribals, when national militia was formed, '*Kutha*' meat used to be cooked for all. Akali ji, with his influence with Sheikh Abdulla PM of Kashmir, got *Jbatka* introduced for Sikh soldiers. On many occasions, he was included among the five *piaras* for foundation laying ceremony of new gurdwaras. He would eat food cooked only by Amritdhari Singhs / Singhanis or cook himself – otherwise he would go without eating.

The most important task, which Akali ji undertook, was construction of Guru Nanak Ashram at Chakar, to serve as a boarding house for students. The location chosen was in the Mazaffrabad District. On the west was Rawalpindi, on south Poonch, on the east Baramula, on the north Chalas. All around were many primary schools, but students had to travel long distances to study in middle / high school. This was a great handicap and a source of discouragement. This boarding house would be useful for them to study in high school at Muzaffrabad and other middle schools. This was close to concentration of Sikh population and would be useful, as the community was backward in high school education. With great efforts, approval was obtained and the foundation laid by the Governor of Kashmir on 28<sup>th</sup> Har 1985 BK (1938 AD). It got completed on 10<sup>th</sup> Sawan 1989 BK (1941 AD). To meet the expenses for the construction, Akali ji contributed the entire amount of sale of his famous work "Index of verses of GGS" (*Sri Guru Granth Shabad Ratan Parkash*), and undertook tireless travel to collect contribution from affluent Sikh persons/families. Many prominent Sikh personalities participated in the inauguration ceremony. Well known among them were Mahant Mangal Singh ji Nangali, Poonch, Sant Budh Singh ji Mirpur, Bhai Sudh Singh ji Ragi of Sargodha and many others from J & K and North Western Frontier province. Earlier, many illustrious Panthic visitors like Bhai Vir Singh, Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha, Sardar Ishar Singh Majhail, Bhai Ladha Singh of Faridkot and others participated in *Akband Path*, *Kirtan* and *Kavi Darbar*.

Total expenses are estimated to have been Rs 1, 42,600 on building only. Lot of essential material for the *Ashram* was purchased and nearly 7000 books added to the library, many of which were valuable old manuscripts. Included in these, were *Faridkot wala Teeka*, *Mahan Kosh* of Bhai Kahn Singh ji Nabha, *Janam Sakhis*, *Suraj Parkash*, *Old and New Panth Parkashs*, *Gurbilases*, *Gur Sobha*, 50 *Birs* of Guru Granth Sahib including a *Bir* of Guru Granth Sahib signed by the 9<sup>th</sup> Master.

The store included Press equipment, sewing machines, *Langar* equipment, *Rumalas*, *Chaddars*, *Palkis*, *Kirpans* and other traditional items for Amrit ceremony, etc. The Ashram served as school-cum-boarding house for boys. Akali ji also started a Girls middle school on 7<sup>th</sup> Bhadon 2000 BK and about a dozen girls got admission. Many Ashram girls did matric / gyani / JBT after that and got jobs.

A newspaper *Kashmir Sikh Samachar* was started which continued till 1947.

Alas! this dream of Akali ji was shattered, when in Oct 1947 AD (Katak 2004 BK) tribals encouraged by Pakistan first concentrated on West Kashmir border, and then suddenly attacked, causing devastation and destruction, murder and rapine on the way close to Sri Nagar. Chakar Ashram was an important target and was burnt and looted. Many inmates died heroically fighting the invaders. Akali Ji, then in Punjab, flew back to Sri Nagar and guided Indian Army and Air Force as they were new to the terrain. After that, his attention was directed to taking care of those who survived the attack, injured and hungry including widows and orphans in different camps. The help included winter beddings, food, first aid, etc. Large number of refugees entered India through Attari Border and were encamped at Kurukshetra. There was another camp for 500 for which PEPSU Govt offered help at Sangrur. There were endless problems of untimely supply of food, clothing, sewing machines for widows, and unsympathetic attitude of officials. He was constantly taking up issues with the Rehabilitation Minister downwards. Maharaja Yadavindra Singh, Raj Pramukh of PEPSU, took a lot of interest in Akali ji's efforts.

At Kurukshetra, a special *Amrit Sanchar* camp was organized for Sikhs (nearly 1200) with the help of Chief Khalsa Diwan and SGPC, who arranged *parchar* for a month to keep up the morale.

He appealed to Sheikh Abdulla, Prime Minister of Kashmir, to give compensation for the loss at Chakar, arrange land/buildings in Jammu, which was estimated at nearly two and a half *lakhs*. Also, he kept on making lists of persons lost, girls abducted, widows, persons in various camps such as Kurukshetra, Sangrur, Nagrota (Jammu) Chakrata (UP) Yol (Kangra), Jaipur, Ashram, Rambagh, Srinagar, etc., so that their rehabilitation could be organized. This continued till the end of his life.

In view of concern shown in Sikh Educational Conference, New Delhi, about the spate of apostasy, especially in Malwa area of Punjab, special camps were organized in Sunam and Mansa for *Sikhi Parchar*, Gurmukhi literacy and *Amrit Sanchar*. Nearly 500 persons were initiated. He issued detailed guidelines for village improvement, daily routine, Amrit ceremony and all other aspects connected with this programme.

While he was preparing for a second round of tour of Malwa, in November 1952, he fell ill. In December 1952, he was brought to Dukh Niwaran Sahib, Patiala, where with high blood pressure his condition worsened. On 11<sup>th</sup> January, he was admitted to Rajindra Hospital, Patiala, but his condition did not change, and he breathed his last on 23<sup>rd</sup> evening 1952. His last rites were performed in the Gurdwara Dukh Niwaran Sahib Complex.

At the conclusion of *Akand Path* a large number of Sikh *sangats* joined including the Chief Minister PEPSU, Sardar Gian Singh Rarewala, many Ministers, Officers, scholars such as Hira Singh Dard, Baba Prem Singh Hoti, Prof Ganda Singh Historian, Sant Singh Tegh and many others. A Resolution included setting up a Library in Dukh Niwaran Sahib in his name, a colony where 280 families uprooted from J & K to be settled, his biography to be written, etc. A large number of condolence messages came on his death. These were from Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh, Bhai Vir Singh, Bhai Ardaman Singh Bagrian, Sant Kartar Singh Kamaliawale (Patiala), Sant Gurbax Singh of Muzaffarbad (Kashmir), Col Rajinder Singh Chakaar, Maulvi Md, Yusuf (Chakaar) and many others eulogized his qualities and achievements.

He was an indefatigable Sikh *Parcharak* known for his sincerity in propagation of Sikh way of life, and high standards of devotion to the

Guru. His zeal for education of Sikh youth is reflected in the setting up of the Ashram at Chakar. And last but not the least, he was an author of rare insight. Some of his works are mentioned below :

- i. Index of Sri Guru Granth Sahib (ਗੁਰੂ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਰਤਨ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼). This is a colossal work of sheer dedication and perseverance completed in 13 years in those days when computer was unknown.
- ii. Indexes of *Varan Bhai Gurdas* and his *Kabits*.
- iii. ਦਿਸਤਰੀ ਸੰਕਟ ਮੋਚਨ: He established, quoting from various scriptures of Hindus, Bible, Koran, Guru Granth Sahib, that widow remarriage is acceptable.
- iv. *Hazuri Sathi*: The account of those running the organization of Hazur Sahib Nanded.
- v. *Guru Gobind Singh's tour of the South*
- vi. *Sri Gur Sobha* by Sainapat poet in 10<sup>th</sup> Guru's Court. Introduction and Publication of the rare manuscript.
- vii. Many unpublished/translation of *Gurbani*, *Rebatnamas* of Bhai Nand Lal, *Mehma Parkash*, *Nitnem gutka*.

Akali Kaur Singh *ji* will be remembered as a one-man institution — a zealous missionary, an educationist, humanist and a scholar rolled into one.

□

*I am ever a sacrifice to those,  
Who concentrate on the Word of God.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p. 879

ਨਾਨਕ ਤਿਨ ਕੈ ਸਦ ਬਲਿਹਾਰੀ ਜਿਨ ਏਕ ਸਬਦਿ ਲਿਖ ਲਾਈ ॥

## REVIEW

### SRI GUR PANTH PARKASH (VOL 1)

A REVIEW BY SARAN SINGH\*

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*Author : Rattan Singh Bhangoo*

*Translator : Prof Kulwant Singh*

*Publisher : Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh*

*Pages : 530; Price : Rs 400/- (Hard Bound)*

The romance of history of the Sikhs never ceases to amaze and fascinate. As observed by late Prof. Anil Chandra Banerjee: "In the early writings on Guru Nanak the role assigned to him is that of a Deliverer and Saviour."

In 1969, the quincentennial year of Guru Nanak's advent on earth, *The Sikh Review* had the privilege to publish an authentic account of Guru Nanak's visit to Sri Lanka written by the noted Buddhist scholar, Saddhamangala Karunaratna. In the recent past, Dr. Devinder Singh Chahal of Canada, an entomologist by profession, came upon evidence that points to Guru Nanak's journey to Constantinople – the modern Istanbul.

New vistas are opening in the Sikh religion's incredible history. While keen students have been familiar with the felicitous *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas, with the post-1708 writings of Kavi Santokh Singh in 'Sri Gur-Pratap Suraj Granth', Kavi Sainapat's *Sri Guru-Sobha* and Koe Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi Dns*, (in original and translation) we now have Rattan Singh Bhangoo's picturesque epic: *Sri Gur Panth Prakash* handily available, thanks to the bold initiative of Institute of Sikh Studies based in Chandigarh, embodying a refreshingly vibrant translation by Professor Kulwant Singh.

Sample this from EPISODE 14 (P. 81) in Dohra format:

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\* Courtesy : Sardar Saran Singh, Editor, *The Sikh Review*, Calcutta



“The Khalsa must be as autonomous and self respecting,  
 As embodiment of all the Divine attributes in plenty.  
 Never submitting to the sovereignty of anyone else,  
 Except the sovereignty and autonomy of God alone.” (35)

The original text, essentially in epic verse and, couched in classical - if archaic - Punjabi, does not fall in the category of popular reading. Its episodic structure and fanciful diction call for enormous patience that the modern-day scholar does not often possess. Digressions and deviations, peculiar to medieval epics, also tax the patience of a work-a-day reader. Yet the compelling saga of the birth, struggle and growth of the Sikh nation, in all its pathos and glory, deserves to be read - if not in the original Punjabi then at least in Prof. Kulwant Singh's elegant translation, so that we become aware of the agony and ecstasy of the emergent Khalsa Panth. This volume covers translation of 81 Episodes, with excellent reference sheets at the tail-end.

The moving account of the 18th Century history has been translated in poetic English, with monumental patience, and a remarkable perception and empathy. Indeed, the translation acquires an enchantment of its own in a way that most history books cannot dream of. If Rattan Singh Bhangoo was a poet-chronicler, then the translator, in his own way, gives intimations of a philosopher of rare sensitivity and depth. The spirit of Rattan Singh Bhangoo would surely be pleased to discover this latest resurgence of interest in his remarkable work. We owe Prof. Kulwant Singh and Dr. Kharak Singh a debt of gratitude for bringing *Sri Gur Panth Prakash* into limelight for the English knowing history scholars. The translation also unfolds a major primary source of Sikh history. The second volume will doubtless be keenly awaited.

Meanwhile, *The Sikh Review* has also been serializing the translation of the same epic, in prose, by an equally dedicated scholar, Sr. Gurtej Singh.

## SRI GUR NANAK PARKASH – PART 1

A REVIEW BY GURBAKHSH SINGH USA\*

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*Editor : Dr Kirpal Singh*

*Publisher : Dharam Parchar Committee, SGPC, Amritsar*

*Pages : 880; Price : Rs 165/-*

*Gur Partap Suraj Granth* is the most popular Sikh epic both among the *Kathakars* and the general Sikh *sangat*. It is regularly recited and explained by a Sikh scholar, a *giani*, in the evening gatherings in almost all Gurdwaras. Some people, being very much interested in listening to the life history of the Gurus and their teachings, are very particular not to miss the *katha*. Not only one enjoys the chronological episodes from the lives of the Sikh Gurus but one feels that the values and culture of the Guru period of Sikh history recorded by the author, are extremely interesting even today. This has changed the lives of many listeners of the *katha* and motivated them to love and value *gurmata* and be an active member of the Sikh Panth.

Bhai Santokh Singh, the poet laureate of the Sikh Panth (born 1788), wrote it in Brijbhasha under the patronage of the Raja of Kaithal. The words of the author reveal his mind, which was thoroughly drenched in the love of the Gurus. This has made the epic very popular among the Sikh masses. It is very soothing and good to listen to the services rendered to society by the Gurus and the guidance given by them to a common person to live his life on the right lines of faith and morality. The great bard has used his high-class scholarship to impress the readers with the spiritual greatness of the Gurus and their contribution towards peace and welfare of people.

After completing this great epic, the first and the last of its kind,

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Bhai Santokh Singh brought it to the Akal Takht (year 1843-44 AD) Amritsar, and presented it to the Guru Khalsa Panth as his offering like a humble Sikh of the Guru. Soon after he died which indicates that his life's mission was to complete this immortal epic on the lives of Gurus.

Brijbhasha is not much different from the common Punjabi we speak, but many words/phrases need to be translated before the readers can properly understand the meaning and message of the writings. The erudite Sikh scholar, Bhai Veer Singh edited this *granth* in early thirties of 20<sup>th</sup> century with meanings and footnotes to explain some difficult words and phrases of the epic.

The Brahminical influences in Nanak Parkash and Gur Partap Suraj Granth are due to the Brahmins who had been supervising the work of Bhai Santokh Singh as has been stated by Bhai Vir Singh in his *Prastawna Potbi*. Being a member of the *Nirmala* sect, his approach was to interpret Gurmat in terms of Hindu philosophy. The inclination toward Hindu mythology was perhaps his compulsion to please the Brahmins. During the time of Bhai Santokh Singh, the Sikhs in general had been leaning towards Hindu customs and traditions. The Singh Sabha movement stopped this trend among the Sikhs, later.

The Dharam Parchar Committee of the SGPC has decided to undertake a thorough study of these old writings regarding the life history of Gurus, their teachings and their contributions in the social and political life of Indian society. The Sikh heritage is lying unexplored in some of these old Sikh and non-Sikh writings, particularly the Persian sources of history. A part of it was studied by Dr Ganda Singh who discovered very valuable facts, hitherto unknown to the Sikh historians. To make this treasure of the Sikh heritage, both historical and religious, available to the historians and the Sikhs, the Dharam Parchar Committee sanctioned "*Sikh Sarot Itihask Granth Sampadna*" project.

Dr Kirpal Singh, a committed and a devoted historian, formerly Head of the Department of History, Punjabi University, Patiala, was assigned the responsibility of undertaking the editing of the major Sikh sources of history. To begin with, he chose *Gur Partap Suraj Granth* which is a very commonly read Granth, but has many mythological, non-*gurmat* and even some anti-*gurmat* statements. The Granth describes the life history of all the Gurus. Bhai Santokh Singh studied the available literature and then toured many important places

to know the facts first hand as available with the local people for writing this epic. The Sikh scholars were concerned since long to edit this epic and review such observations in it, which are inconsistent with the teachings of *gurbani*. Finally, this responsibility fell on the shoulders of this senior Sikh historian.

The first part of the *Gur Partap Suraj Granth*, covers the life history of Guru Nanak Dev, and is titled *Sri Gur Nanak Parkash*, which has two divisions; the first half, *Purbaradb* and the second half *Uttararadb*. Each half is divided into two sections. This book is the translation of the first section, and consists of 32 chapters.

The book describes the family of the Guru, his birth, his childhood, his learning under the guidance of a *Mullan* (A Muslim teacher) and a *Pandha* (a Brahmin teacher). Later on, it describes the early life of the Guru and the miracle *sakhs* connected with the Guru, movement of the Guru to Sultanpur Lodhi, his marriage, and birth of his two sons. It ends with the Bein *sakhi* and resignation of his job by the Guru. It also describes the choice of Bhai Mardana as the associate of the Guru for his journeys and then their leaving on the first long itinerary to the east.

This is the first time that a complete Punjabi version of the book has been attempted with detailed notes and summary of the episode at the end of each chapter. The editor has chosen some critical and important episodes from the above period of the life of the Guru and discussed them and brought out the historical facts for the readers.

It is good that the editor has also given in the beginning, a brief sketch of the life of the author *Kavi Santokh Singh* and his love for the Guru. His *Nirmala* background is visible from the slant and tone of his wordings. Not only is there lot of material added by the *Kavi* from his own imagination, but he has also literally used Hindu mythology and Puranic references in this epic. His mission is clear, he wants to glorify the image of the Guru to the level of the Hindu *avatars* and gods. At some places, it is obviously unbelievable.

The editor has done an excellent job in critically reviewing such writings and giving his comments. These comments have made this book acceptable to all Sikh readers. The book is very suitable to be kept in each Sikh home for study by all, young as well as old.

## BABA ALA SINGH.

A REVIEW BY SURJIT SINGH GANDHI\*

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*Author : Dr Kirpal Singh*

*Publisher : Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar*

*Pages : 163+12; Price : 250/-*

*Baba Ala Singh*, a dissertation by Dr Kirpal Singh, is a landmark addition to the historical literature concerning cis-Sutlej region of the Punjab, especially the role played by Baba Ala Singh in its politics. The study is unique in the sense that it utilizes all available historical sources including Marathi sources, *Akbbarat Darbari Muallah*, 'Boundary Dispute Correspondence' et al, whereas the authors of the earlier works '*Tarikh-i-Patiala*' and '*Baba Ala Singh*' did not have access to these works. Besides, the author very skillfully has given an account of Baba Ala Singh both as an individual and as an important figure of the then Indian political landscape. The author also highlights how Sikh ideology spurred Ala Singh to build his kingdom.

In the eighteenth century, particularly after the demise of Aurangzeb, the Mughal Empire skidded fast towards its decline mainly because its policies were centred on Islamic unitarianism. Many forces challenged the supremacy, unity and prestige of the Empire leading ultimately to its dismemberment and rise of different independent principalities in different parts of the Mughal Empire. The cis-Sutlej region was typical in the sense that it spectacted its decline and its disintegration in all its dimensions.

The Marathas were impatient to grab a part or the whole of the region. Isa Khan, originally the Jagirdar of Akbar and Faujdar of Lakhi Jungle under Jahandas Khan, staked his claim to the *Subedari* of

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\* Principal (retd), Govt College, Sangrur

Sirhind. Rai Kalha of Raikot, the Afghans of Malerkotla had their own plans to expand their political influence. The Brars, known for their ferocity and adventurous spirit, carried their depredations upto Sunam and Raikot from their base at Faridkot. Bhattis, Hindu Rajput converts to Islam, aspired to carve their independent principality. Dal Khalsa, the socio-military organization of the Sikhs also wanted to be recognized as a political force. The Subedar of Sirhind, whether he worked under Mughal Emperor or Ahmed Shah Abdali, could hold his reins very strongly primarily because of their Masters' vacillating political stands and unprincipled manifestations of the political elite, close to Delhi rulers.

Amidst such a fluid situation arose Ala Singh who is popularly known as Baba Ala Singh. People prefixed *Baba* which literally meant 'respectful' with his name because they held him in high esteem.

Ala Singh started his career as a petty Zamindar of Phul amidst rivalries of the descendants of Tiloka who was his uncle, and other chieftains – all aspiring for higher political status in the cis-Sutlej region. Ala Singh, through his wise diplomatic overtures, most successfully combated the aggressive designs of the sons of Tiloka, and set himself on the course to be considered a significant local chieftain.

In the process, he left his ancestral village Bhadaur and shifted to Barnala to free himself from the dominating influence of his brother, Dunna. Shortly after, he alongwith his brothers, pressed hard on the descendants of Tiloka to hand over to them the villages which formed their share of the common property of their ancestors. Ala Singh, besides retaining Barnala got Tapa, Khara, and Tajoke, Khan se Mehta, Aakalia, Pheruwal, Hudiya and Dhabuwali. These villages became the nucleus of the Patiala kingdom which Ala Singh built step by step.

Visualising the fast emergence of Ala Singh as a powerful chieftain, the neighbouring Zamindars and chieftains felt much upset. Rai Kala, Jamal Khan of Malerkotla took help from Asad Khan, the Faujdar of the Jalandhar Doab and attacked Barnala. Ala Singh sought the help of the Dal Khalsa, then hovering around in the neighbourhood and defeated them. The victory of Ala Singh exalted him to the position of a powerful chief. Not only this, it brought him closer to Dal Khalsa who now looked upon him as one of them, aspiring for establishing Sikh influence in the cis-Sutlej area.

Thereafter, Ala Singh followed a two-pronged policy of consolidating and safeguarding his rule. He established villages where he encouraged his kins and admirers to settle and to serve as military posts. For example, he raised the village Longowal and acquired Dodan (modern Bhawanigarh), which served as bases to organize forays against the Bhattis. Ala Singh's successes made him a cynosure of his co-religionists as also of all those who were tired of chaotic conditions. The popularity of Ala Singh was galling to Ali Muhammad Khan, the newly appointed Faujdar of Sirhind who arrested and shut him up in the fort of Sunam for failing to make payment of heavy amount of tribute as a token of his total submission to him. Feeling completely devastated and desperate, Ala Singh patched up with Karam Singh, the surviving head of the Seema's family, and through his help he managed to escape out of the fort to resume and reorganize his activities. Ali Muhammad was chagrined, but had to abandon his efforts, when he learned about the impending march of Ahmed Shah Abdali.

Subedar's departure from Sirhind further emboldened Ala Singh to subdue his adversaries. He defeated Jodha, the ruler of Bathinda, killed Farid Khan and snatched Munak from Sardar Khan. All these conquests brought immense popularity to Ala Singh who began to be acknowledged as the most resourceful chieftain of the area. After this, he had to fight against the Bhattis, the Rajput converts to Islam who had been carrying on their depredations into the territory of Ala Singh. He defeated and killed Bhatti chiefs, Inayat Khan and Walayat Khan in the battle of Budladha. Soon after when the most powerful of the Bhatti chiefs led a strong contingent against Ala Singh, he was defeated at village Khudal which further skyrocketed the prestige of Ala Singh.

Expansion had its own challenges and Ala Singh proved fully capable to meet them successfully. He now had to reckon with big powers such as the Mughals, the Afghans, and Marathas — all of them though antagonistic to each other but brimming with the ambition to establish their control in the cis-Sutlej region. Ala Singh's role was difficult, but he played his cards very dexterously. That he appraised the political situation at all-India level correctly is a tribute to his expertise in crafting valid political strategies. In the process, whereas he safeguarded his own territories, he did not permit any leeway either to the Marathas or Afghans to get a firm foothold in cis-Sutlej region.

Side by side, his stature among the Sikhs, especially among the Dal Khalsa, enhanced who recognized him as one of them to bolster Sikh influence.

He sided with the Mughals in the battle of Manupur. Probably he wanted to soften the Mughal attitude towards the Sikhs including himself. When after 1756, Cis-Sutlej region was ceded to Ahmad Shah Abdali by the Mughal Emperor and the Abdali's governor of Sirhind planned to crush him, he induced the Marathas to realise their long cherished ambition to establish their influence in Punjab by not allowing Ahmad Shah Abdali to tighten his grip over the cis-Sutlej area. In the battle of Panipat, Ala Singh extensively helped the Marathas. The purpose seems to be more than what the textbooks say. Besides safeguarding his own territories, he wished to be in proximity in terms of political relations with powerful indigenous forces to combat the Mughal and Afghan menace. Ahmad Shah Abdali, while returning to his country, plundered Barnala and arrested Ala Singh. Ala Singh was at the mercy of the Afghans. At that time, he very adroitly cultivated good relations with Abdali through Najibuddaula. He ingratiated himself as his supporter. Much pleased, Ahmad Shah Abdali ordered Zain Khan, the Faujdar of Sirhind, to recognize Ala Singh as duly designated chief with 726 villages in his possession.

During and after the carnage of the Sikhs in 1762, there occurred a change in the mood of the Ahmad Shah vis-à-vis Sikhs, who now thought of putting one section of the Sikhs against the other. Ala Singh was very shrewd to manipulate the circumstances in his favor. He accepted the title of Maharaja and the insignia of royalty, kettledrum, and banner. Perhaps, to expose Abdali, for his hypocritical approach to Islam, he agreed to pay the cost which Abdali agreed to accept for granting premission to Baba Ala Singh to keep his hair unshorn as mark of his Sikh identity and as an invaluable gift from the Guru.

This move of Ala Singh was unpalatable to the Dal Khalsa whose help was always crucial in his career. Dal Khalsa considered him a co-fighter against the Mughals/Afghans and, therefore, it was difficult for them to digest that Ala Singh accepted the title of Maharaja from Ahmad Shah Abdali. The crisis, however, was averted when Ala Singh explained his position and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia assertively argued



that Ala Singh's design was a diplomatic move.

All these facts, the author has graphically portrayed. While detailing the facts, the author amply highlights the administrative policies and personal character of Ala Singh. The most important aspect of his administration was that it was not particularistic; it was singularly secular. It was perhaps the only bright spot in the whole politically murky landscape of the late eighteenth century. The author supports his opinion with copious references from the *Junghnama* by Qazi Nur Muhammed who was contemporary of Baba Ala Singh. The focus of his administration was the welfare of his subjects, especially the peasantry who were encouraged to bring under cultivation large tracts of fallow lands. He took care that his officials behaved gently and lovingly with them. It was due to the extensive cultivation of land that he could spare food for his political allies.

His civil administration was simple and easily accessible. The impact of his administration was integrative. This was the reason that Ala Singh's rule did not face any revolt or any organized dissent.

The author very cogently distinguishes Ala Singh from other chieftains of the cis-Sutlej area. Whereas, the latter were authoritarian and unresponsive, Ala Singh was compassionate and considerate. Ala Singh was inspired by Sikh ideology whose dominant feature is seeking welfare of the whole mankind. On the other hand, his contemporary chieftains had only one objective and that was to keep themselves in power. Ala Singh's personal character was aboveboard, morally sound, while majority of contemporary chieftains were unscrupulous and had no love for morals.

The biography is well-crafted and well-documented. The learned author, however, has touched only marginally the role of Dal Khalsa in Ala Singh's career. He has also given only a very brief account of Ala Singh's relations with the Marathas and the Afghans.

## SALUTING SIKH SOLDIERS OF WORLD WAR I AND II

A REVIEW BY KARTAR SINGH\*

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*Compiled & Editor : Surjan Singh, PBM, PBS, FRGS, BA (London)*

*Publisher :*

*Pages :*

Surprisingly, the British Raj when recruiting Sikh soldiers laid down strictly that those who join the British Army had to be the traditional Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh, and they were also required to strictly follow the Sikh code of conduct. How I wish that the Indian Army had continued this fine tradition for its own recruitment!

Sardar Surjan Singh had done an excellent research regarding the contribution of Sikh troops to the British Army in the World Wars I and II. In fact, historians have recorded that before World War I began on 1914, a third of the Commonwealth forces were from Punjab, of whom more than 50% were Sikhs. It is also recorded that in 1989 the number of officers and men from undivided India stood at 1, 80,000. Interestingly, this figure had risen to over two million by 1945. The Sikh Light infantry was raised during this period. Lieutenant General Sir Bhupinder Singh, Maharaja of Patiala, is known to have taken great interest in Sikh troops between the two wars.

In the World War I, Sikh soldiers fought bravely in Iraq and Palestine. The gallantry of the 47<sup>th</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> Sikhs in Iraq against the Turks was highly commended. In France, the gallantry shown by the 47<sup>th</sup> Sikhs at La Basse on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct, 1914, and the Capture of Neuve Chapelle was greatly inspired by the bravery of Sikh soldiers. In fact many Sikh soldiers laid down their lives fighting to save France against the German Army. It is sad to note that today the French Government fails to recognize that it was the Sikh turban that saved their country. S Surjan Singh records, "French history would have been different,

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had it not been for the turbaned Sikh soldiers.”

## GALLANTRY AWARDS

The author has recorded the numerous awards won by Sikh soldiers in both the Wars. He writes, “It is not possible to write of the bravery and gallantry shown by all the soldiers who fought in the World Wars – each soldier showed bravery at varying degrees – Hence some were awarded recognition, while others were not”. He then records the names of those Sikh soldiers who were awarded the top honours of the Indian Order of Merit (IOM), Indian Distinguished Service Medal (IDSM) and of course the ultimate and glorious award – the Victoria Cross. This is the highest and most prestigious award for gallantry in the face of the enemy, that can be awarded to British and Commonwealth forces. The Sikh soldiers who won the VC are legendary and their names are written in golden words in the history of the Indian Army. They are Ishar Singh, Karmjeet Singh Judge, Gian Singh, Nand Singh, Parkash Singh, Karam Singh and Preminder Singh Bhagat. All of them and other Indians rose to high ranks after independence.

The author has traced the history of the Sikh Regiment and Sikh Light Infantry with live pictures taken during the wars. The part relating to 45<sup>th</sup> Rahray's Sikhs and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Sikh Regiment makes interesting reading. Mazhabi and Ramdasia Sikhs were enlisted as a Regiment in 1941 by the British. They had, however, long formed a part of the Khalsa Army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The designation was changed to Sikh Light Infantry in 1944.

The author has to be congratulated for his formidable stamina in collecting the data with names of all Sikh soldiers who died in both the World Wars. He appears to have visited various countries all over the world to gather detailed data with respect to each Indian soldier who laid down his life. Hence the size of the book. It is, therefore, essential for all libraries in India to have access to this book. The Indian Armed Forces need to be most grateful to him for carrying out this research on their behalf.

The author has dedicated a pictorial page to the Sikh soldiers of World War I and II whose records were destroyed or went missing due to the ravages of the Wars, and hence their names remain incognito. The Sikh Community salutes them and remembers them. Kudos to the author Sardar Surjan Singh for compiling painstakingly the history of the two World Wars with particular reference to the great contribution of Sikh soldiers in the British Army.

## PANTHPRAST GIANI SHER SINGH

A REVIEW BY RAGHBIR SINGH\*

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*Author : Hardev Singh Dhalival PPS*

*Publisher : DSGMC, New Delhi*

*Pages : 205+; Price : Rs 50/-*

The author of the book, S. Hardev Singh, has been a police officer by profession, but a study of the book reveals his love for Sikh history. This is, perhaps, due to the fact that being a nephew of Giani Sher Singh, the same blood which flowed in the veins of Giani ji, throbs in his heart also. Giani ji, a village boy born of illiterate parents, lost his eyesight at the age of 2 years. His maternal grandmother, although illiterate too, was a lady devoted to virtues of Sikhism. She resolved to see her grandson become a scholar among Sikhs revered by all high and low, by dint of his erudition about Sikh Thought. She put him in the charge of Sikh Saints in her village. He assimilated the message of Gurbani and became its great exponent in their company. In due course, he learnt a good deal of Hindi and Sanskrit also. He had working knowledge of Urdu, Persian and English, too. The author has provided the readers with a very useful insight of the thinking of Giani ji who was more enlightened about the Sikh *sidbant* than the present leaders and more farsighted in safeguarding the religious and political interests of Sikhs from the inimical forces. Giani ji's power of argument was so great that a Christian missionary who taught him English with a view to converting him to Christianity, left teaching him fearing lest he may himself become a Sikh. Giani ji's arguments in favour of Sikh demands were so vociferous and weighty that even seasoned leaders like Madan Mohan Malavia, Moti Lal Nehru, MK Gandhi and Pandit Nehru could-

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\* # 2984, Phase 7, Mohali

not stand before him. It is another thing, that being in majority they flouted every claim of the Sikhs. Pandit Malavia was so impressed by his arguments that he offered to bear his expenses if he went to England for studies in law. His love for Sikh Gurus was so intense that when Gandhi ji described Guru Gobind Singh as a mis-guided *desb bhagat*, he immediately resigned from the Congress.

To let the readers share Giani ji's talent, the author has extensively quoted from his writings about various issues confronting the Sikhs. Here are a few examples of his views, understanding and approach to the problems:-

1. Panth can be Guru Panth only when it follows teachings of Guru Granth Sahib.
2. Panthic power is the life of Shiromani Committee. And so long as Sikhs control their Gurdwaras, there is no reason why they should dance to the tunes of the Government as an intelligent Sikh would never like to buy his shroud in lieu of his life;
3. Independence is another name of fearlessness.
4. When the formation of Shiromani Committee was under discussion, he advised the moderates to stop playing upon Nero's flute, and instead share the burning cauldron of life and death with their companions.
5. About Gurdwara Sudhar Lehar of 1921 he says, "The government, instead of inflicting physical torture on us, is now bent upon destroying our religion."
6. Rejecting Nehru's Report about the complicated issue of communal representation in the Punjab Council, he says, "Hindus are satisfied that they have Indian Parliament and also the rest of India with them. Our fear is that Sikhs may not get sufficient seats and Punjab would be converted into an Islamic State. He was of the view that in Punjab no community should have absolute majority to rule over others. Sikhs can agree to 40, 30 and 30 formula to Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. When Sikhs are already entitled to 19% seats why should they agree to Nehru Report under which they may get hardly 12-13% seats?"
7. If any Sikh joins Congress, he should not honour tri-colour flag, as it does not contain *Kesari* colour which had been agreed to be part of Indian flag, but Nehru was vehemently against its inclusion.

Giani ji advised the Sikhs to better fly their own Khalsai Kesri flag.

8. Expenditure on Gurdwara buildings, *karah parshad*, etc., and establishing Gurdwaras thoughtlessly at the cost of expenditure for Dharam Parchar are weakening the Sikhs both in religious and political spheres.
9. Rulers of Sikh States and their children are causing irreparable loss to the Sikh Panth by matrimonial relations with Rajput families according to Hindu rites.
10. In view of the professional skill of Sikh soldiers, he was opposed to the Congress boycott of Second World War efforts, in favour of Sikhs joining the Indian Army in large numbers so that when British leave India, the Indian Army should be strong enough to successfully face any attack on India by any outside force.
11. He advocated a strong and united India in which Punjab should enjoy complete autonomy.

The book provides an opportunity to its readers to compare the farsightedness and commitment to Sikh cause of our past leaders with that of the present leaders. It could give more useful reading, had its author edited it properly to describe the events in a more systematic way to avoid confusing of views of various leaders with each other. Division into Chapters such as 'Giani ji's early days', 'Giani ji as a Dharam Parcharak', 'Giani ji's Political Acumen' would have made the reading more easy and comprehensive.

In the absence of mention of years of some events, dates become confusing while the years mentioned on page 77 are misprints. Still the book is of much help to the Research Scholars of Sikh History relating to Giani ji's period.

Giani ji, though blind since the age of 2 years and without any formal education, brought credit to the Sikh Community by virtue of his erudition and dedication to the Sikh Panth. On his death, SGPC received condolence messages from many high dignitaries like S. Aurangzeb Khan, Prime Minister NWFP and Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad. Late S. Dhanna Singh Gulshan, MP and Minister of State in Govt of India, paid him glowing tributes on the eve of his first death anniversary as under:-

ਸਿੱਖ ਪੰਥ ਦੇ ਚਮਕਦੇ ਕੋਹੇ ਨੂਰ, ਲੈ ਗਈ ਸਵਰਗੀ ਧੂਰ ਚੁਰਾ ਤੈਨੂੰ ।  
 ਕੌਮੀ ਚਾਨਣਾ, ਅਣਖ ਤੇ ਤੇਜਭਾਨਾ, ਕਿਥੋਂ ਢੁੰਡੀਏ ਹੀਰਿਆ ਜਾ ਤੈਨੂੰ ।  
 ਤੇਰੀ ਥਾਂ ਤੇ ਲੜਗਾ ਕੌਣ ਨਲੂਆ, ਰਿਹਾ 'ਪਾਕਿਸਤਾਨ' ਬੁਲਾ ਤੈਨੂੰ  
 ਝਾੜੂ ਹੰਝੂਆਂ ਦਾ ਤੇਰੀ ਮੜ੍ਹੀ ਉਤੇ, ਦਿੰਦੇ ਰਹਾਂਗੇ ਹਰ ਸਮੇਂ ਦਾਦ ਤੇਰੀ ।  
 "ਅਵਲ ਪੰਥ" ਦਾ ਨਾਅਰਾ ਲਗਾਉਣ ਵਾਲੇ, ਸਦਾ ਟੁੱਬਦੀ ਰਹੇਗੀ ਯਾਦ ਤੇਰੀ ।

The author and the DSGMC have rendered a real service to the Sikh Community by bringing out this informative book about the Lion Singh of the Sikh Community for the guidance of our leaders and the young generation in whose hands lies our future. It is reasonably priced too. Every Sikh young man should read it.

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*If the mind is unclean,  
 It cannot be purified by worshipping stones,  
 Visiting places of pilgrimage, living in forests,  
 And wandering about like an ascetic.  
 He alone acquires honour,  
 Who cherishes the True Lord.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 586

ਪੂਜਿ ਸਿਲਾ ਤੀਰਥ ਬਨਵਾਸਾ ॥  
 ਭਰਮਤ ਭੋਲਤ ਭਏ ਉਦਾਸਾ ॥  
 ਮਨਿ ਮੈਲੈ ਸੁਚਾ ਕਿਉ ਹੋਇ ॥  
 ਸਾਚਿ ਮਿਲੈ ਪਾਵੈ ਪਤਿ ਸੋਇ ॥

## NEWS & VIEWS

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### CITY GOES TO VILLAGE

Varinder Walia focuses on an effort to help rural students take the qualifying exams for engineering and medical streams.

With a noble mission to offer as good an education in the countryside as available in cities, some Delhi-based Punjabis have launched an ambitious project, Gyan Sewa, in at least 100 villages of Punjab.

As part of the pilot project for the first year, two coaching centres have already been set up in villages—one at Talewal village near Barnala in the Sangrur district and the other at Khadur Sahib village in the Tarn Taran district. Every weekend, subject experts from Delhi teach here students of classes XI and XII and train local teachers. Mr H. S. Phulka, a senior advocate of the Supreme Court, says it is their endeavour to enable students of rural areas to qualify for medical and engineering seats.

Patwant Singh, an eminent journalist, is the founder of the Gyan Sewa Trust, while its trustees include Mr H. S. Phulka, Dr G. S. Grewal, Dr Raghubir Singh Basi and Mr Avtar Singh Dhindsa.

According to Dr Maninder Kaur Phoolka, the gap in the quality of education available in the cities and in villages has been widening. As a result, the education level in villages has been going down drastically.

To check this disparity, the Gyan Sewa Trust was formed to set up projects and take quality education (accessible, so far, to students in metros like Delhi only) to the remotest villages of Punjab.

The Trust decided to pick the best possible resources available in Delhi and take these to the villages. To bring students from villages to cities for education would probably have cost less than what it



would take to transport the faculty from Delhi to the villages. However, notwithstanding the cost factor, the Trust decided to reach the subject experts from Delhi to villages to spread awareness among villagers and to train their teachers.

One of the first projects this year is of setting up coaching centres in villages to prepare the students for various entrance examinations.

Mr H. S. Phulka says, in big cities, there has been mushrooming of centres that train students exclusively for these examinations.

However, students from villages do not have this privilege, even though they may be more intelligent than city-bred youngsters. They just lack the opportunity to study professionally for professional courses. Instead, they choose ordinary streams like BA and B.Sc.

There are hardly any jobs after plain graduation or postgraduation. This generates a lot of frustration among the rural youth. In the next five years, the trust proposes to set up 100 coaching centres in villages. It also plans to launch campaigns against female foeticide, drug addiction and cruelty towards women.

Villagers from these 100 places would be educated about the disastrous consequences of these evils. (*Courtesy : The Tribune, August 8, 2006*)

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LUDHIANA CHAPTER OF THE ISC FORGES AHEAD

International Sikh Confederation has been established with the sole motive of bringing together all those organizations, which are working for the cause of Sikh Community so that a Synergy can be brought about in their working and Sikh Community can progress.

Keeping this in mind the Ludhiana chapter of ISC has established different committees to coordinate such activities.

Dr. Arvinder Singh has been appointed Chairman of Education and Vocational Training Committee and has been directed to constitute his committee by 31st Jan.

There will be short-term plans of 2 years duration each and a long-term plan of vision 2020 for this committee.

SHORT-TERM PLAN

The 1st short-term plan effective till 30-4-2009 is as follows:

1. To contact & enlist all the organizations in Ludhiana district which are working in the field of education and vocational training.

2. To collect data from District Admn. regarding literacy levels in Ludhiana District, the availability of primary, secondary & technical education.
3. To start non formal education centers in Ludhiana city and villages where there is need. Different Organisations may be approached to sponsor these centers.
4. To enlist the services of voluntary teachers for this literacy drive.
5. To start vocational training course in villages & Ludhiana city as per need of the area and marketability.
6. To evaluate the services being already provided in this sector by Govt & NGOs and to devise methods to improve the quality.
7. To enlist the support of Deptt of Extension Edu, PAU, JSS Ludhiana, NYK and other such agencies to achieve these targets.
8. To promote the use of Punjabi language in all spheres of life.
9. To provide scholarship to deserving students for higher education.

LONG-TERM PLAN: VISION 2020

To make the Sikh community in particular and Punjab as a whole a leading state in the field of Education and Knowledge resources, the ISC plans to do the following:

1. To start 5 centres of excellence in education in different corners of Ludhiana District where primary & secondary education will be provided on a non profit basis, irrespective of caste, creed and economic status. These centres will serve as good foundation for the future of our community.
2. To start 5 centres of technical training in Ludhiana District where students can choose the trade they want to specialise in.
3. To start 5 career guidance centres where coaching for various competitive exams can also be provided.

CALIFORNIA EDUCATION BOARD VOTES TO REMOVE SIKH IMAGE FROM TEXTS

March 8, 2007 Sacramento — The state Board of Education voted Thursday to ask a publisher to remove from a seventh-grade history textbook a picture of a Sikh religious leader that many followers said was offensive and inaccurate. (*Courtesy : New York Times, March 8, 2007*)

THE SPIRIT OF SEVA

Last month, while traveling to Pune with my daughter, I strained my leg muscle in the coach and by the time our train arrived, I was not in position to move even a yard. The retiring rooms at the station were full. Just then, a Sikh gentleman who had observed us came up and suggested that we move to the nearby gurdwara in the Camp area. Within a few minutes, he arrived with an autorickshaw and gave the driver directions, and us, his contact number.

The gurdwara authorities immediately allotted a room to us and I was taken to the hospital run by their trust. After giving first aid, the doctor guided us for further treatment in the nearby nursing home and within two days' stay at the gurdwara, I improved considerably and was in position to recommence my journey.

I have often read about the Sikh community's noble acts of service without any consideration of caste, religion or faith, especially when natural calamities hit and leave trails of human devastation. It seemed as if they felt that service to humanity was divinely ordained and the guiding path to reach God. This time I had experienced it myself in everyday life. The serene ambience at the Gurdwara was also very soothing for me.

As an Indian living in India, where people practice different faiths I have a chance to know something about all religions.

It is a fact that all religions preach selfless service to humanity. Lord Krishna says in the Gita, "Dear Arjuna, there is no fall for him either here or hereafter who works for the good of others." Prophet Mohammed says, "That man is a Muslim who works for the happiness and benefit of God's creatures." Similarly, the Bible says God loves him who is in the service of His children. But when it comes to practice, there are not enough of us who can match the spirit of our Sikh brethren. Where does the difference lie? Is it a talisman passed on to them by their Gurus? (Courtesy: *Hindustantimes*, February 15, 2007)

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### SANTA BANTA JOKES

The IOSS welcomes the stand taken by "Sikh Media and Culture Watch, Mumbai," on 'Sikh jokes' as reported by *Hindustan Times* of March 09, 2007 (published below):

The Sikh community has finally spoken up against the onslaught of Sardar jokes. The immediate provocation is a booklet on Santa

Banta SMS jokes, in circulation in Mumbai. The booklet cover has two Sikhs – Santa in a pink turban and Banta in a blue one.

“We have no problem with the use of the names Santa and Banta, but here they are clearly portrayed to be Sardars,” said Jasmeet Singh, a member of the Sikh Media and Culture Watch that has complained to the Maharashtra Minorities Commission.

In a memorandum it submitted to the minorities’ panel on Wednesday, the Sikh group said such acts were “deeply humiliating” and should be considered racist.

A member of the group had stumbled upon the pocket sized booklet, published by Ideas, at Rasik Book House in Matunga in Mumbai, which is the sole distributor of the Rs. 25/- booklet. The protesters have objected to jokes such as : “What will a Sardar do with a Xerox copy? Check with the original.” We want the publishers to be taken to task. It is better late than never. There are blatant references to Sikhs and Sardars. There has to be an end to this,” said Swarnjeet Bajaj, another member of the group. “Today the booklet is circulating in Mumbai, soon it will spread across the world. There are enough jokes on the net already.”

The minorities’ commission has decided to send a letter to the Mumbai police commissioner, asking him to book the culprits under Section 295(A) of the Indian Penal Code. “This section deals with hurting religious sentiments with deliberate and malicious intent,” said Dr Abraham Mathai, vice chairman of the commission. The publishers of the booklet could not be contacted. (*Courtesy: e-mail by Garpreet Singh, member IOSS*)

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TURBAN ISSUE

The IOSS views with dismay the apathy of the Indian Government in not solving the “Turban issue” in France. Despite the assurances given by various Government officials, including the Prime Minister, Ministers, Chairman of the minorities commission, etc., that the Sikhs would be accommodated in French schools without compromising their identity, nothing has been achieved till date – as is evident from the Indian Government affidavit filed in the court, where they have gone to the extent of washing their hands off this case by stating that the Sikh community should tackle this by itself “under the gambit of law.”

This deplorable act has been further compounded by the inaction of the Sikh leaders /Sikh organizations based in India – who have shown little or no interest in this very serious matter. Issuing of letters /statements in the media without follow up action and no end result seem to have become the “convenient” way out.

While long-term solution to this problem should be worked out, in the short-term, these Sikh students should be provided with scholarships and opportunities by the Sikh community to pursue their education in other countries so that their formative years are not wasted.

It is appealed to the Sikh community to impress upon the GOI / Government officials to deal with this on an urgent basis. It is further appealed that Sikhs worldwide should show solidarity and protest against French interests – wherever they can.

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#### POST ELECTION (2007) POINT TO PONDER

Sikhs have voted for known anti-Sikh Political party – Congress. BJP known anti-minority party responsible for Punjab's trifurcation has voted Akali Dal to power.

How this new realignment will affect Punjab in general and Gurdwara management in particular, needs attention / study. (*Personal views of Bhai Ashok Singh*)

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MONTY BEATS CASTRO FOR BEST BEARD AWARD

London, December 28. England may have lost the battle for the Ashes to arch-rivals Australia, but Monty Panesar has a reason to celebrate after the left-arm spinner edged out ailing Cuban leader Fidel Castro, Archbishop of Canterbury and Inzamam-ul Haq, among others, to win the Beard of the Year 2006 Award.

The Beard Liberation Front (BLF), an informal network of beard wearers, said in a press note that Panesar has finished on top, narrowly beating Castro.

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams and veteran trade union leader Paul Mackney were tied for the third place after a vote of BLF supporters for the hirsute person who has made the most impact on public life in 2006.

Other nominees for this year's award included author Bill Bryson, broadcaster Bill Frindall, politician George Galloway, journalist

Christopher Howse, broadcaster Brian Perkins, author Terry Pratchett, broadcaster Tom Robinson, Sulton cheesemaker Richard Rowlett, actor Ricky Tomlinson, Jimmy Wales of Wikipedia and musician Robert Wyatt.

Panesar, first Sikh player to don England jersey, has been a front-runner for the award right from the beginning and BLF organiser Keith Flett told BBC Radio Northampton that it was combination of facial hair and on-field heroics which tilted the scale in the spinner's favour.

"He may have a beard for slightly different reasons, but at the end of the day it's still a beard, and it's a magnificent beard," Mr Flett reasoned.

Incidentally, Andrew Flintoff had won the inaugural edition of the award back in 2004 and was declared joint winner, along with Paul Mackney, last year for his gingery-blond designer stubble.

Fighting a lost Ashes battle in Australia, Flintoff did not feature in the nominations this year as his "beard has declined during 2006," according to the BLF statement.

The Beard of the Year Award is a prize awarded in December of each year in the UK by the BLF to acknowledge someone in the public eye who has created positive publicity for the wearing of beards. (Courtesy : *The Tribune*, December 29, 2006)

~~~

### ***Letters to the Editor***

Dear Editor,

In the editorial for the issue of Oct-Dec 2006/538 NS of *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*, you have mentioned to have a Standard English translation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS) as one of the two immediate tasks to be taken up. I am full of appreciation for the same since I feel that it is absolutely needed. But I feel there is going to be a big problem to realize it. This is due to non-availability of a standard interpretation of SGGS in Gurmukhi from which a translation in English could be made. Here it is to be noted that interpretation of SGGS can not be standardized since Gurbani is the word of Lord who is perfect and it is written, compiled and edited by the Guru who was also perfect. Hence, for its interpretation also the man has to be a perfect one. Gurbani itself enlightens in *Sukhmani* that one gets the enlightenment according to the intellect bestowed by God; due to this there has to be variation in the interpretation of Gurbani depending on the level of intellect of the person engaged in the task. Gurbani

further emphasizes the point as thus:

A rare one can contemplate Gurbani if he is a Gurmukh. This *bani* is of the supreme Master and with this one obtains the dwelling within his own home. ||40||935

Here *Gurmukh* means a perfect person having the illumination of God within.

ਬਾਣੀ ਬਿਰਲੁ ਬੀਚਾਰਸੀ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਹੋਇ ॥

ਇਹ ਬਾਣੀ ਮਹਾ ਪੁਰਖ ਕੀ ਨਿਜ ਘਰਿ ਵਾਸਾ ਹੋਇ ॥੪੦॥ (ਪੰਨਾ 935)

In view of above it may not be possible to have a perfect version of its interpretation from which it has to be translated into English unless Gurmukhs are associated with the task. This limitation, you yourself have pointed out in your writing that interpretations made by Bhai Sahib Bhai Vir Singh and Bhai Sahib Dr Sahib Singh, the two great and giant Sikh scholars and also both being Gurmukhs, do not match. In view of this, endeavour should be made to produce a version which could be called a base lined version which may be open to be improved subsequently as and when interpretations are made by the highly spiritually elevated souls. However, if a standardized version, without making it perfect, is produced, it will block the way forever for a better and a true version to come in future.

Tarsem Singh

<singhtarsems@yahoo.co.in>

~~~~~

Dear Editor,

I am very grateful to you for publishing my letter on the subject : Translation of Guru Granth Sahib in English, published in AOSS (Vol IX, Issue 1) Jan-March, 2007, pages 126-27.

There are few glaring typographical errors which defeated the sanctity of my comments particularly in spelling mistakes and of punctuation marks of ਏਕੋ, ਇਕੋ, of Guru Granth Sahib ji which should be:

1. Para 2 line 7 of page 126 :

- i. ਏਕੰਕਾਰ, in place of ਏਕੰਕਾਰ /
- ii. ਏਕੋ, ਇਕੋ in place of ਏਕ, ਇਕ

2. Para 2 line 2 of page 127

- i. full in place of all
- ii. intricate techniques in place of intricate teachings

3. Para 5 line 3 of page 127

i. ਬਰਨਤ in place of ਬਰਤਨ

My house address is #600, instead of #200.

I shall be obliged if these corrections are published in the next issue of AOSS to maintain the sanctity of words of Gurbani in true spirit.

Yours sincerely

Inderjit Singh

#600, Phase 2, Mohali

~~~

### EXCELLENT WORK

Dear Editor,

First of all accept my heartiest congratulations on your monumental work of *Gur Panth Parkash*. Everybody knows it is the primary source of Sikh history. Due to its chaste Punjabi language, only a few scholars could read it. But you have done a wonderful job to translate it into a very simple English to be understood by a layman without changing its rhythm in original. And the *sone te subaga* is that now this work is available in three script in one book – Punjabi, Roman and English. Some Punjabi people cannot read Punjabi language, a transliteration is a great help for them to understand. I think it is a new addition to the Institute of Sikh Studies' achievements. I have discussed with some of my friends here in USA about the contents of the book. They are very much interested to read it.

I also congratulate the Institute of Sikh Studies for its new website. The old one was an incomplete website, which disappointed the visitors. It is now updated with new *Abstracts*. Also, a few other Institute's publications are also available on the site and are very user friendly. I, therefore, request that the other books published by the Institute may also be posted on the new website.

With deep regards

Dr Dilpreet Singh

<dilpreetr@yahoo.com>

~~~

DERAS AND SIKH SOCIETY

Dear Editor,

Our impressions about Sant Babas and their *deras* are mostly based

on hearsay or news items in TV or newspapers. I have not come across any serious research paper or publication giving what lifestyle they have, what they teach, and what influence they have on Sikh society. It will be a good idea to interview some devotees to have first hand impression.

I can give a gist of what I observed and felt on short visits and infrequent associations with some of them.

My first association was with Sant Niranjan Singh *ji* who used to visit Lucknow in 60s and 70s. He had a saintly appearance, a polite and soothing conversation, mostly did *keertan*, many a time at *amritvela* and gave discourses on *gurbani* and spiritual life. If there were Hindu devotees in the gathering, he used to quote from Gita also. He discouraged people from touching his feet, but many still did this anyway. When I was posted in Patiala, I visited his *dera* a few times. Gatherings were smaller, mostly he did *keertan* and very brief discourses. His stress on *simran* and holy life did influence the devotees.

Once I happened to visit with a friend *dera* of Baba Virsa Singh in his sprawling farmhouse outside Delhi. Baba *ji* was inspecting horses in his stable, so we could not have audience with him, though we did have a glimpse from a bit far away. We sat in the congregation. A discourse on some incident of Babbar Khalsa movement was being narrated fiercely by an equally fierce looking person. I believe many devotees, high positioned officials, are associated with the *dera*. Their views encouraging Dasam Granth are well-known.

During my first visit to USA, a relation took me to *dera* of Singh Sahib Yogi Harbhajan Singh *ji*. By chance Brig Hardit Singh had also come, so we were together. He received us courteously. We offered some books by IOSS, which he glanced at casually and passed on to his staff. His wife, Bibi *ji*, though showed some interest. Yogi *ji* talked mostly of his association with Presidents, PMs, Church heads, etc., and very little of *bani* or *Sikhi*. At dinner time, he passed some harsh comments on Bh Vir Singh *ji*, which made us sad.

He gave us *sirpa* in the *diwan* next morning and asked us to see sports followed by *langar*. Many devotees touched his feet. He was very popular and respected by *Gora* Sikhs. His followers get up at *amritvela*, do *ninam* and *yoga* and maintain - disciplined life as Sikhs. His views propagating *Kundalini yoga* are not in line with Sikh thought, nor is his installing miniature statues of the Gurus around the building. Notwithstanding this, his

popularizing Sikh faith in West is commendable.

Another place I visited is worth mentioning. Dodra near Mansa. The head, popularly known as Bauji, was not there for health reasons. The *sangat* is well known even abroad for stress on *Nam simran*. Then an annual *samagam* was being held. Arrangements were modest but adequate. Special features were self help for cleaning toilets. *Naam simran* at *amritvela*, then *nitnem* and *keertan*. Food, simple *dal-roti*. Free time was used for informal discussions on *simran*, spiritual state of devotees and other Sikh topics – no politics, no mundane matters, no backbiting. All by voluntary attitude. Atmosphere of love and devotion overwhelming. People gathered around enlightened individuals to ask questions and listen. No upmanship. I attended some other gatherings in Patiala and now in Mohali. Similar atmosphere prevails. I have listened to audio tapes and read pamphlets on Bauji's discourses/views; these are highly emotional and sentimental in the love for the Guru, *Wahguru*, and *sangat* and one cannot remain untouched. In this holy environ, I got the feeling of all pervading love!

Bh Jasbir Singh Khanewale was known for devotional *keertan* on a simple tune and for his great philanthropic work of setting up and running the Eye Hospital at Sohana. He was ever busy on constant tours to *sangat* far and wide for collecting funds for the noble cause. Once I had audience with him for a personal problem which was worrying me. His few soothing words interspersed with Gurbani made me feel at peace – as if the Guru had spoken through him.

Soon after retirement, I came in touch with Baba Iqbal Singh ji of Baru Sahib, and for a year took Sikh History classes for 10+1 class at Chandigarh. His zeal for education for rural boys and girls is to be seen to be believed. It combines general education with Sikh tradition – early rising, *nitnem*, *keertan*, awareness of Sikh History, etc. Although he is a retired Director of Agriculture, with his rustic appearance, and soft words everybody feels comfortable with him; he has attracted best talent and devoted team to run his institutions, which are ever expanding. Recently, he has published a book on Sikh principles *Sikh Sidhant* which on a systematic format gives a gist of Sikh thought. He insists devotees to greet him with *Gur Fateh* though some still touch his feet.

Gurcharan Singh

142, Phase 4, Mohali

DEAR READER

EVERYBODY LOVES A GIFT

What can be a better gift than the Abstracts of Sikh Studies (AOSS), as this is the Journal fully committed to the cause of Sikhism? If you are interested in making one, fill in the information and mail it to us. We shall do the rest:

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- 1. To bring the latest advances in Sikh Studies to the notice of scholars and general readers.**
- 2. To project a correct image of Sikhism and the Sikh Community in India as well as abroad.**
- 3. To watch, report and rebut any distortions or misrepresentations of Sikh Religion and its History.**
- 4. To serve as a living link, and provide coordination among organisations engaged in promotion of Sikh Studies.**
- 5. To highlight problems of Sikh diaspora, and suggest solutions.**
- 6. To arrange reviews of important publications relating to Sikhism.**
- 7. To assist readers in framing an informed opinion on matters relating to Sikhism and Sikh Studies.**
- 8. To give publicity to activities of various Sikh Societies around the world.**
- 9. To act as a forum for expression of readers' views.**
- 10. To advertise appropriate literature on Sikhism.**

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ABSTRACTS OF SIKH STUDIES

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EDITORIAL

DERA SACHA (?) SAUDA

Dera Sacha Sauda of Sirsa in Haryana has attracted headlines in the newspapers during the last few weeks, and may continue to be in the news in the weeks to come. The name recalls to one's mind the great spiritual deal Guru Nanak struck. As we all know, the Guru's father was keen to induct him into business. He gave the young Nanak a sum of Rs 20/- or so, which was by no means a small amount in the fifteenth century, and sent him to the nearest market at Chuherkana, with instructions to buy some merchandise which could be sold at a handsome profit in his own village. On the way, he came across a group of *sadhus* who had been hungry for several days, which moved his young tender heart. Without a second thought, he spent all the money to buy food, and gave the hungry *fakirs* a hearty meal. They were happy, and blessed their young benefactor. Nanak knew that he would have to face his father's wrath at this outrageously unbusiness-like conduct. But he was clear in his mind that no other profit could match the blessings and prayers of the beneficiaries of a charitable act. He was sure that he had struck a real good bargain, a *sacha sauda*. A gurdwara stands on the spot with that name, giving the message for all times that feeding the hungry is a foremost duty of all human beings. The lesson has not been forgotten, as is clear from the endless chain of *langars* run by the Guru's followers across the globe. Incidentally, the proposed *atta dal* scheme of the present Akali government in Punjab seems to have its roots in the great lesson taught by the Guru.

The present-day Dera Sacha Sauda was founded on a modest scale at Sirsa by one Mastanji of Baluchistan in 1948, and given this name 'Sacha Sauda', obviously to exploit its association with Guru Nanak. As expected, people started visiting the *dera* under the impression that it was the message of Guru Nanak that was being

preached there. The present Baba, took over the dera as its head in 1990 at the age of 23, under dubious circumstances from Param Pita Shah Satnam Singh *ji* Maharaj and adopted an aggressive posture. His following swelled into hundreds of thousands spread mostly over rural area of Punjab and Haryana, particularly in the Malwa region, and looked after through a network of sub-*deras*. Side by side, a real-estate buying spree started, so that the *dera* now stands on sprawling 700 acres at Sirsa. All means from persuasion to outright coercion were used in its acquisition. According to a Sirsa lawyer (Sh Ashwani Bakshi) it was not uncommon to see reports of dead bodies being found in the *dera's* vicinity.

The Baba has discarded the simplicity of his predecessors, and lives in a royal life-style in a huge palace with a large retinue of *sevadars* and *sadhis* constantly at his service. All *sevadars* and *sadhis* are enjoined to practise celibacy, although the Baba is himself married, and has children.

His growing popularity attracted politicians including the Congress as well as the Akali leaders. His influence can be judged from the fact that in the last Feb 2007 Punjab Assembly elections, the Akalis lost most of the seats in the Malwa region, which traditionally belonged to them, as a result of an edict from the *dera* to support the Congress candidates. This could not have happened without a clandestine understanding between the Congress and the Baba.

In earlier stages, the *dera* kept a low profile, following a subtle agenda, and appeared to function as a sect of the Sikh religion. But things changed with the present incumbent who made no such pretensions and assumed the title 'Hazoor Maharaj Sant Gurmit Ram Rahim Singh' to spread his tentacles among Hindus and Muslims as well. He wanted to show that what he preached was a new dispensation. Surprisingly, he did not add Christ or Jesus to his title. Perhaps he did not expect any followers from the Christian stock, since their missionaries look after their flock real well. It is only the Sikhs and Hindus, particularly the former, who have neglected the missionary functions almost completely, leaving their poor ignorant masses vulnerable to allurements from other faiths.

Things came to a head, when on the 13th May, 2007, an advertisement appeared showing the Baba attired like Guru Gobind Singh, imitating the Guru administering the *amrit* at the time of creation of the Khalsa. He donned robes and a *kalgi* (plume) like what Guru

Gobind Singh is believed to have worn, and to outdo the Guru, he administered his '*Ruhani Jaam*' sherbat in Sirsa to seven *premis*, instead of five *piaras* as selected by the Guru.

The Baba says he had done it earlier also, but the matter came to the notice of public only when the advertisement of the 13th May for the ceremony at Salabatpura was issued.

Sikhs see Guru Gobind Singh as manifestation of God Himself, and revere him as *sarbandsani* for the unparalleled sacrifices he made for the noble cause of uplift of mankind and the defence of the poor and the lowliest sections of humanity, giving them a sense of self-respect and pride, unknown to them earlier. With such deep reverence for the Guru, no Sikh can tolerate even the slightest disrespect to him. The despicable act of imitating the Guru on the part of the head of the Dera Sacha Sauda, is highly sacrilegious and clearly amounts to blasphemy. It led to spontaneous protests, demonstrations and clashes. The *dera* had expected such a response, and had prepared the *premis* for a clash. It is clear from the fact that at the time of the clash at Salabatpura on the 14th May, the *premis* used sticks of the same kind and size. Truckloads had been brought to Bathinda in anticipation of the reaction. The clashes left one dead (shot by the *dera premis*) and several injured.

The advertisement referred to above was accompanied by 47 directives to the *premis*. Out of these, nos 27 and 35, are quite suggestive. While the former directs the *premis* not to listen to any criticism of their *satguru*, or enter into any argument, the latter exhorts them to be ready to lay down their lives fighting for their country and their true *satguru*.

The Jathedar Sri Akal Takht and the other high priests of the Sikhs called a Sarbat Khalsa meeting on the 17th May, 2007 at Talwandi Sabo, and issued an edict calling for social, religious, economic and political boycott of the *dera* and the *premis*, and demanding closure of all *deras* by the 27th May, 2007. The Chief Minister, Punjab, Sardar Parkash Singh Badal called an all party meeting to discuss the situation on the 18th May, 2007. Leaders of other communities including Hindus, Muslims and Christians, led by Swami Agnivesh advised the Baba to tender an apology for the hurt caused to the Sikhs and other admirers of Guru Gobind Singh. All they could extract from the Baba, after several rounds of talks, was a vague statement which was not an apology by any stretch of imagination, and which was not signed by

anybody. This was rightly rejected by the Sikh High Priests, and the situation continues to be tense.

The Punjab Government has registered a case against the Baba under section 295 for causing hurt to the religious feelings of the Sikhs. In addition, according to the *Tehelka* dated 2nd June, 2007, there are the following cases of murder and rape pending against him:

1. "On July 10, 2002, *Dera* functionaries shot dead their former colleague Ranjit Singh while he was working in his fields in Kurukshetra. Singh was suspected to have leaked an anonymous letter written to the Prime Minister by a *sadhvi* alleging rape at the hands of Baba Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh. According to the CBI chargesheet, Ranjit had been threatened by the accused to seek apology from the Baba. The CBI arrested Inder Sain, Avtar Singh, Kishan Lal Pradhan, Jasbir Singh and Sabdil Singh. While the CBI has accused these five persons and others of criminal conspiracy, the Baba has not figured in the CBI's chargesheet.
2. "On September 24, 2004, the HC ordered the CBI to probe allegations of sexual exploitation made in the anonymous letter by the *sadhvi*, and also in pursuance of the report submitted on the matter to the HC by the Sirsa District and Sessions Judge.
3. "On October 10, 2002, Ram Chandar Chhatarpati, the Sirsa based editor of *Poora Sach*, was shot and grievously wounded by two men who were later arrested. Chhatarpati had done a series of stories on the *dera*, and had also published allegations of rape and sexual exploitation against the Baba. Later, *dera* manager Krishan Lal was also arrested in the case."

It is almost five years since these cases were registered. The CBI probe into the charges of two murders and rape and sexual exploitation of *sadhvis* by Baba Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, was ordered by the Punjab and Haryana High Court in 2002-03. Though the probe was time-bound, repeated extensions were sought by the CBI, besides litigation against the HC order in the Supreme Court. This inordinate delay indicates that efforts are being made to hush up this politically inconvenient case. This led to a scathing indictment of the CBI by the HC on April 16, 2007, and is suspected to be a major factor behind the trouble in Punjab provoked by the advertisement placed by the Baba on May 13, 2007 in two regional dailies. A Division Bench of

Justice A K Goel and Justice H S Bhalla asked the CBI Director to explain the delay, and indicated the possibility of initiating contempt proceedings. The HC went so far as to record: 'A period of almost – five years has expired. Such gross delay in investigation can hardly be expedient to administration of justice, and creates a doubt about the sincerity and competence of the officers who have been assigned the responsibility of carrying out the investigation. We are unable to hold that there is any genuine reason for the CBI for not having conducted the investigation so far. ...The only inference is that the officers concerned have either not been sincere or have been acting on extraneous considerations in dealing with the matter. (*Tabelka*, June 2, 2007, pp 16-17). On April 17, 2007, the HC ordered the CBI to complete its probe into the three cases by May 25, and listed the matter for hearing on 28th May, 2007. The compliance of this order did not go beyond a report to the effect that the probe cannot be completed before the end of August 2007.

We learn from newspaper reports that five persons have now been booked in one of the cases, and that the Baba is not among them.

Vested interests have come in. The Baba supported the Congress in the last elections to the Punjab Assembly, so the Congress Government in Haryana, and the UPA Govt at the Centre are likely to shield him. Then there are elements that want to destabilize the Akali-BJP govt in the Punjab to secure President's rule in the State, as has happened more than once earlier also. In fact, the demand has actually been voiced by the Baba.

Another view is that the release of the 13th May advertisement, and subsequent developments were engineered by the Baba, to demonstrate his strength and to give a warning to the authorities that, in case any action was taken against him, he could unleash trouble on an unprecedented scale.

Whatever the reason, the Baba appears to be immune to any punitive measure, although there is enough evidence against him in all the cases mentioned above. In addition, he could also be tried under the National Security Act for creating disturbance in the border state and jeopardising its peace and tranquility as well as security of the country. But the possibility of the government proceeding on those lines is remote. That reminds us of an anecdote:

"You have to pay for your sins!" When he returned after a few hours he found that someone had added a footnote, "Please disregard this notice, if you have already paid".

It seems that the Baba has already paid. Hence no action should be expected against him.

The Panth is facing a very serious situation. The disrespect to the Guru cannot be overlooked. The challenge must be met. The Panth is united like one man on this issue. The Sikh masses as well as all major Panthic organizations have rallied behind the Akal Takht, and expect a lead from it.

To deal with the Sacha Sauda problem, the Panthic convention must consider a peaceful *marcha* at the *dera* headquarters at Sirsa, to secure the arrest of and legal action against its head and others responsible for the outrage committed by them in imitating Guru Gobind Singh Ji. We should also demand fresh legislation on All India basis providing for stringent punishment for offences of the kind indulged in by the *dera*.

The boycott of the *deras* and the *premis* as directed by the Akal Takht must be strictly enforced. Violence must be eschewed and disturbances in the Punjab territory scrupulously avoided, since it can provide an opportunity as well as justification to impose President's rule in the State. It must be noted that although tempers have been high, the Sikhs have shown remarkable restraint in spite of grave provocations, and not a single instance of violence on their side has been reported, in contrast to some recent and earlier agitations by other parties. This restraint must continue. We have to act with foresight and far sight. Politicians with a lust for power will be made to provoke us. We should not fall into their trap. For, even slightest violent retaliation can prove disastrous. Our response to any situation must reflect our ideology, which permits use of force as a last resort only.

It may be necessary to launch a prolonged struggle. With faith in the Guru, we should be prepared to make any sacrifice in a disciplined manner like we did at Jaito, Guru Ka Bagh, Nankana Sahib, etc., in the Gurdwara Liberation movement in the early twentieth century. The struggle can end only in complete victory of the Panth. The situation has been handled so far in a statesman like manner under the

will continue to play its role. The whole Panth is behind it. It seems desirable to involve the Sikh intelligentsia in the decision making process.

The situation calls for a radical approach and a plan of action that will promote ascendancy of the Panth. We must admit that we have completely neglected *dharam parchar* and/or missionary work, leaving the field open for the likes of Baba Sacha Sauda to mislead the innocent Sikhs. Otherwise, who would quit the great religion of Guru Nanak to become a follower of an impostor? The *deras* flourish in ignorance of the people. That ignorance has to be removed. Once the masses are educated about the lofty ideals and the way of life preached by the Gurus, they will themselves resist any intrusion. There is no other lasting defence.

This responsibility squarely devolves on the SGPC which is regarded as the mini-parliament of Sikhs, and which has the necessary resources. Under the patronage of the Akal Takht, a meeting of all Panthic organizations and Sikh intellectuals should be convened without delay to chalk out a planned programme. We need to launch a mass movement or *gurmat chetna lehar* to cover all villages, towns, schools, colleges, etc. We need a large number of *parcharaks* who must be recruited and trained, besides a large number of teachers to teach divinity in educational institutions. Special programmes and camps for the youth will have to be organised. All resources, financial as well as others, need to be diverted towards this programme. The SGPC and the DSGMC should come together, and with the cooperation of the existing network of gurdwaras and other Panthic organisations ensure success of the movement on a sustainable basis.

As this note is being written, the call for *marcha* has already come, this time, rather from unexpected quarters, the Sant Samaj. The call deserves whole-hearted response from all Sikhs. The Guru beckons us. The agitation/movement must, however, be guided and directed through an Action Committee representing all major Panthic organisations as well as intelligentsia. The objective is to secure deterrent action on the part of the government against the *dera* head, so that nobody dares to repeat the blasphemy of initiating the Guru. The centre of the agitation should be Sirsa, where the outrage has been committed. An agitation in the Punjab would be senseless and

GURU GOBIND SINGH*

PROF PURAN SINGH

They of India have not understood Him. Gandhi calls Him a "misguided patriot". Men of this world, who wish to comprehend Truth by their own intellectual measures, are forever incapable of understanding the true nature of *Inspiration*, which is the life-breath of the really great. Whenever they approach such inscrutable personalities, they make but grotesque estimates. After centuries of intellectual advancement, they stand still exactly on the same spot, utterly incapable. In one age to them, Joan of Arc is but a witch and the end of intellectual justice is to cast her in fire. Today the ghost of non-violence is let loose, and Guru Gobind Singh is a "misguided patriot". Christ says "judge not". Because, we are not omniscient nor seers of all the three times – past, present and future – it is impossible for us to judge truly even common fellow-men like ourselves, in spite of an intimate contact and even identity of our natures and motives. Much more difficult becomes our forming opinions about beings who have, in their inner nature, transcended our plane of existence.

The Intellectuals who seem to be great, who are famous these days, at best are but Synthetic Personalities, the mere Laboratory-Products of the systems of the schools of man-made, mind-born Ethics, and are but Toy-replicas of *The Great*, whose conduct is spontaneous, whose character is the radiation of the Sun.

The Truly Great are the products of those mysterious cosmic processes which make the sun and the moon. For the dead toy-replicas of the great, it becomes physically impossible to analyse the inner motives of these beings of immortal inspiration. All opinions expressed

* Written in 1916 in response to comments by - The 'Father of the Nation' - Gandhi; The 'National Poet' - Tagore; The 'Historian' - Sarkar.

by such lower men about those who *Live, Move and Have their being* in acceptance of the Cosmic Inspiration, are as false as the opinion of the clergy who declared Joan of Arc a witch and sentenced her to be burnt alive.

Sword is the symbol of the creative processes of that mysterious incomprehensible Creator - Complex of Nature. Nature is not Creation they say, it is Evolution they say; it is not Being they say, it is eternal Becoming they say; it is not Spiritual they say, it is Material and Mechanical they say; it is all Electric Substance they say, it is not Soul they say; but only the insane doubt now that it is a Complex. No one view can define it accurately. Guru Gobind Singh sees the Flash of Sword in this dark Mystery-Complex. He sings his "Song of Sword" and by its cadence transmutes the miserable wretched people of the Punjab, not into temporal kings – a miracle, which even an ordinary worldly man of empire-carving ambitions like Sivaji, could perform in transmuting his mercenary soldiers into Peshwas, but into Phula Singh Akalis. Cut these Disciples of Guru Gobind Singh, as they did cut Bhai Mani Singh, instead of blood, the Nectar of Inspiration flows from their veins. The Name of the Eternal resounds in their bones, and as they of the world sawed them asunder, only that glorious cadence - Sat Nam was the response to the axe-strokes. His Disciples rose all of a sudden from nowhere, as Supermen, who were at the same time, like the clouds of the sky, raining as they were bidden to rain, and striking down like the bolt of Heaven as they were bidden.

Not *protest* but *Obedience* was their creed. Their protest was one with the protest of the Divine Creator - Complex, called *Hukam* by Guru Nanak in *Japji*, and it shone in the Image of Sword seen by Guru Gobind Singh.

The Khalsa came ready-made from Him - that blue-wearing Superman, armed from head to foot, wholly dedicated, ready to die for a nonce – the historian says, as Minerva from Jupiter, a highly explosive Personality, showering both Nectar and Thunder, as the merest tool of Cosmic-Complex.

In human history, there is no example of such Transcendent Inspiration, unless we go and see the personalities imbued with the Bushido spirit of Japan, as transmuted by the spirit of the great
 that Guru Gobind Singh created a Spiritual

Japan in the Punjab out of His Spirit, and He can be sympathetically understood only by the Bushido spirit of Japan as informed of Buddhism.

Riding His Blue Horse, clad in the Robe of the whole starry Heaven, followed by His Five Horsemen, He goes riding by the doors of His lowly Disciples still and as the horses strike the rocks, the sleeping ones awaken still and Sing:

*O King of Purple Eternity, Who loves us,
Who comes and lies with us at night, unknown to us,
Comforting us in our distress,
O Wearer of the Crest Jewel of all-Godliness, all-Humanity,
Come and meet us the peasants of the Punjab, O Glorious Guru Gobind Singh!
Come ride through our hearts, Come ride through our eyes.*

Guru Gobind Singh is the Indweller of Souls. He is a Vision that vitalises the decaying finite centres of life with the touch of the Infinite. Name Him and you are transported. Name Him and you ride very death to His Door. Woe be for the day, who, surrendering their soul to the false brilliance of any intellect, the Disciples of the Glorious Guru would turn their back on Him - once before in history they did so. The Disciples left Him at Anandpur. But they found no place to go to. Wives denied their husbands; mothers their sons, sisters their brothers - for the Punjabi Sikh Women truly saw there was no life but with Him. What is the world without Him? So they died, so they lived.

Said Khan, the Moghul General, doubted. All have Intellects, not only the modern subtle-minded Hindu. Guru Gobind Singh came riding His Horse to him in his camp. Said Khan leveled his gun at Him. It missed the Guru. He was asked to try again. Said Khan put his head on the Guru's feet. He was informed. The camp lay where it was. The armies of the Moghul still besieged Anandpur. But Said Khan went up to the hills singing Him, as a maiden, falling in love with her man, renounces all and sinks into the depths of life. But the Guru does not show Himself to those who have not entered the Shrine of Acceptance, who have not understood *Reverence*, who have no Wonder in their eyes, and who love not the Spiritual Beauty which transmutes man into Angel in an instant. Perfection is in His Glance.

Intellectuals can form an idea of the Inspiration of the Infinite. It was a Stream that flowed to Him which He received within Himself.

"I was", said He, "reluctant to come here on this earth. But I came."

"My soul is still engulfed in that current of Inspiration-Infinite."

He came and He went. Only the trail of His Garment still shines, the sound of the hoofs of His Steed is still audible. Wrapped in that shining Garment, listening to that sound, we go daily where He is. This is the Religion of His Disciples. Our eyes are red with the Glory that He has shed on our paths. And we go on.

His Sword waves the lightning flashes in the cloud-filled sky, but it rains after the Centuries of oppressing heat.

*Man is the Temple,
Let this Flame burn within there,
As the Lamp of the Eternal,
They are My Khalsa,
In whose hearts burns This Inspiration
Of the Infinite, day and night, undimmed,
He is the Pure.*

□

*People come unclad into the world
And depart unclad from it.
In between, they spread themselves
Out and afar to make a show.
How shall they, who have not understood God's will here,
Bear themselves hereafter ?*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 1238

ਆਵਹਿ ਨੰਗੇ ਜਾਹਿ ਨੰਗੇ ਵਿਚੇ ਕਰਹਿ ਵਿਬਾਹ ॥
ਜਾਨਕ ਨਾਮ ਨ ਜਾਨੀਐ ਅਗੈ ਕੁਝੀ ਕੁਰ ॥

SRI GURU ARJUN DEV – THE FIRST AND FOREMOST MARTYR OF SIKHISM –

DR HARNAM SINGH SHAN*

This year marks the martyrdom-quadcentenary of Sri Guru Arjun Dev Ji, the Fifth Prophet – preceptor of the Sikhs. A great spiritual teacher and a gracious leader of the people, he holds a unique position in the apostolic line of Sri Guru Nanak Dev and in the religious history of the world in view of his significant contributions to mankind in general, and to Sikhism, in particular.

Born on 15th April, 1563, at Goindval (district Amritsar) to a very noble and far-sighted woman, Mata Bhani, Guru Arjun not only inherited a holy line, but also gave rise to a holy progeny. While he himself was the son of the Fourth Prophet-preceptor, Guru Ram Das, and grandson of the Third, Guru Amar Das, he was the father of the Sixth, Guru Hargobind, grandfather of the Ninth, Guru Tegh Bahadur, and great-grandfather of the Tenth, Guru Gobind Singh. He not only centralized and organized the Sikh religion but also developed and consolidated the Sikh community, and created nucleus for the evolution of its tradition and heritage. In addition to imparting religious and moral teachings to the people and attending to various works of public beneficence, he encouraged his followers to take to trade and commerce, which made them adventurous, enterprising, resourceful, fearless and rich as well.

His was a many-splendoured personality – a great sage and seer, thinker and scholar, planner and organiser, charismatic leader, prolific poet and maestro in music, humanitarian and builder of wells and water-tanks, and founder of new towns and cities. Amritsar, Kartarpur, Hargobindpur, Tarn Taran and Chheharta in Punjab owe their origin

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to his vision and endeavour. He worked unceasingly for the upliftment of the common man and the peasantry, establishing institutes for the needy and the sick. The construction of a very vast and deep quadrangular tank, near Amritsar, was initiated by him in 1590, around which he subsequently established the holy town of Sri Tarn Taran. He set up an asylum there in 1596 for the lepers whom he himself served and treated with loving care. He was also an embodiment of love, piety, humility, spiritual insight, service and sacrifice of the highest order.

2

Guru Arjun Dev's most famous contribution is the building of Harimandar Sahib (Temple of God) in Amritsar, popularly known as Darbar Sahib or Golden Temple, whose foundation-stone he got laid by Hazrat Mian Mir (1550-1635), a renowned Muslim divine of Lahore¹, on 28th December, 1588. To signify its accessibility to everyone – belonging to any caste, creed, colour, calling or country – and to symbolize the catholicity of outlook to be preached therefrom, it was given four door openings in all the four directions. This gold-plated magnificent edifice, standing in the midst of the sacred pool like a fully-blooming lotus in glittering water, is a marvel of design and engineering skill as well as a living tribute to his creative and spiritual genius. It is the holiest Sikh shrine and is, indeed, the source of Sikh life and faith.

Compilation of Guru Granth Sahib (then called *Pothi Sahib*) in 1604 at Amritsar was his greatest achievement in the realm of religion. Besides being the living, visible and eternal Guru of the Sikhs and the focal point of their devotion, it is the unique and universal scripture of the world and the only interfaith and interdenominational scripture of mankind, incorporating sacred hymns of 36 holy men across the Indian subcontinent from the 12th to 17th century A.D. They hailed from various provinces and belonged to different castes, creeds and callings. Out of these, 6 are Sikh Gurus and 30 are Hindu Saints and Muslim Sufis.

Guru Arjun Dev, besides being an unusually gifted poet, was also an expert in classical and folk music. He set all hymns included in the Holy Granth to appropriate musical measures and arranged them under 31 *ragas*, in which they are meant to be sung. Having mastery

over many musical instruments of the time, he himself invented a new apparatus and named it Saranda, which he played often while singing hymns in praise of God. His own 2218 hymns along with his masterpiece *Sukhmani* (Psalm of Peace) are also included therein. All these holy utterances, touching every aspect of human life, "speak to", says Nobel Laureate Pearl S Buck, "persons of any religion or of none. They speak for the human heart and the searching mind. Through them we see a Beyond that belongs to us all. And the result is a Universal Revelation."² That is why Dr. J.C. Archer, the famous Professor of Comparative Religion, maintained in 1946, "The religion of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib is a universal and practical religion... The world today needs its message of peace and love."³ And it is, in fact, much more needed and relevant today than ever before. It was the renowned historian, Professor Toynbee, who proclaiming it to be, "part of mankind's common spiritual treasure," stated, therefore, in 1960, – It is important that it should be brought within the direct reach of as many people as possible... A book that has meant, and means, so much to such a notable community as the Sikh Khalsa deserve close study from the rest of the world."⁴

Guru Arjun Dev dictated its holy text to Bhai Gurdas (1551-1636), the great savant, scholar and expounder of the Sikh faith, on the banks of a tank, called Ramsar, constructed by him during the year 1602-03. It was completed on 2nd August, 1604, and ceremoniously installed at Harimandar Sahib on 16th August, 1604. It is, indeed the fountainhead of the message of love, truth, peace and harmony, and is distinctively cosmopolitan, open to the people of every caste and creed for imbibing its inspiring instructions and humanitarian spirit.

Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar (1542-1605), the Mughal Emperor of the day, "appreciated the Guru's character and teaching."⁵ So much so that according to Abul Fazl, his Prime Minister, and Munshi Sujjan Rai Bhandari, "he called at his residence in Goindval on 24th November, 1598. Guru Arjun was then in the prime of his life. His charismatic and handsome appearance, sweet and melodious voice, fascinating charming manners, exalted style of living, warm reception of the Emperor and his singing of the hymns deeply impressed Akbar."⁶ Struck by his spiritual aura and constructive work for the welfare of the people, he offered a substantial grant to Guru Sahib and his

institution. The gracious Guru sought, instead, remission of the *lagaan* (land revenue) payable by the peasantry, which was granted by Akbar soon after.

3

Guru Arjun Dev was the first martyr of the Sikh faith and his blood became the "seed of its church." The path-breaking Sikh concept of martyrdom and the glorious tradition evolved around it during the pontificate of Guru Nanak and his three spiritual successors, and reached climax with his death by unspeakable tortures on 30th May, 1606.

His life and death fully exemplified the religious and ethical injunctions as well as the imperatives of this ideal concept, which originated from the following pronouncements of Guru Nanak, the great founder of the faith:

*If you are keen to play the game of love, step into my street
with your head placed on your palm
(that is, in complete surrender and fervour).
Having set your foot upon it,
lay down your head without any fear or grudge.⁷*

Listen O people! do not revile death.

It is not an evil provided one knows how truly to die.

They do not utter aloud their suffering and bear all that heroically.

God, the All-knower, Himself knows all that. The death of the heroic men is holy

If they die for a righteous cause.⁸

During his detention in Lahore for several days, he was made to sit on a red-hot metal plate and take a dip in boiling water thereafter. Hot sand was poured over him in the scorching heat of summer and his blistered body was then delivered to the cold water of the river Ravi. Hazrat Mian Mir, on seeing Guru Sahib being tortured so inhumanly outside the Mughal Fort of Lahore, lost his composure and pleaded with him to allow him to intercede. Guru Sahib, sitting in divine contemplation, calmed him and enjoined him to lovingly embrace God's will. Mian Mir prayed and left with a very heavy heart.

Describing this heart-rending episode in his report, dated 5th September, 1606, from Lahore to his home-country, Father Ferdinand

Guerreiro, a contemporary Jesuit missionary, who died in 1617, tells:

"The King sent for the said Guru... handed him over to a rich gentile (called Chandu)... He gave every day new torments to the Saint. He ordered to give him much torture. For five consecutive days, he took away his food, he did him thousand and one dishonours. In that way their (Sikhs') good Pope died, overwhelmed by the sufferings, torments and dishonours."⁹

But Guru Arjun bore all that inhuman treatment willingly and courageously with complete poise and fortitude, resigning to the will of God as recorded by another contemporary, Bhai Gurdas, the highly learned amanuensis of his manuscript of the Holy Book, in his symbolic and highly meaningful poem, depicting the state of his soul thus:

*As fishes are at one with the waves of the river,
So was Guru Arjun immersed in the River Divine.
As the moth merges itself into the flame at its sight,
So was the light of the Guru merged with the Light of God.
As the deer hears no sound other than the ringing of the hunter's bell,
So he had nothing in mind except the Word of God in the extremest hours
of suffering...*¹⁰

As if, Guru Arjun Dev had anticipated all that and was fully prepared to suffer the ordeal for his convictions, as stated by him two years earlier while compiling Guru Granth Sahib, in verses such as the following:

*Love of the servant of God has remained constant till the last.
He served Him while living and kept only
Him in mind at departure.
He never turned his face away from His command.
and always rushed to carry it out,
while maintaining his poise with joy.
While obeying His command, he felt joy even in hunger
and never discriminated between sorrow and joy...*¹¹

He was so sure that –

*As we are under the protection of God
not a single whiff of hot air touches us.
As the protective line of God's name is drawn around us,
no pain afflicts us.*¹²

He passed away, thus, in perfect peace of the spirit and abiding

in His sweet will, cherishing Him and repeating:

Whatsoever be Your will and doing, is sweet to me.

I yearn only for the boon of devotion to Your Name.¹³

4

Such a tortuous execution of Guru Arjun Dev was carried out according to the Code of Chingez Khan under specific orders of the then Mughal Emperor, Nur-ud-din Muhammad Jahangir (1569-1627) on 16th May, 1606. In his Memoirs on 19th June, 1606, just 20 days after the culmination of that most tragic event, he himself stated:

There lived at Goindval on the bank of the river Beas a Hindu named Arjan in the garb of a *pir* and *sheikh*. So much so that he had by his ways and means captivated the hearts of many simple-minded Hindus, nay, even of foolish and stupid Muslims, and he had noised himself about as a religious worldly leader. They called him Guru, and from all directions fools and garb worshippers were inclined towards him and reposed full faith in him.

For three or four generations they had kept this *dukan-i-batil* (shop of falsehood or vane traffic, i.e., the Sikh faith) brisk. For a long time the thought had been presenting itself to me that either I should put an end to this shop or he should be brought into the fold of Islam... I ordered that he should be brought into my presence and, having handed over his houses, dwelling places and children to Murtaza Khan and having confiscated his property, I ordered that he should be put to death with tortures.¹⁴

Hence, the Emperor was so alarmed at the growing influence of the Guru and the far-reaching spread of the Sikh movement¹⁵ that he was given the choice of accepting Islam or facing painful death with tortures (*yasa* and *siyasat*).

The Guru spurning it, preferred to submit to the Will of God and suffer death for the sake of religious belief and freedom of conscience, while vindicating the cause of truth and upholding human rights rather than yielding to the will of a bigoted ruler,¹⁶ instigated by Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1569-1624) who titled himself as *Imam-i-Rabbani* and Guru Arjun as *Imam-i-Kufar*. It was he again who then congratulated Murtaza Khan, the said Mir Bakhshi of Jahangir and expressed his jubilation in

The execution of the accused *kafir* of Goindval at this time is a very good achievement, indeed, and has become the cause of a great defeat of the hateful Hindus. With whatever intention they are killed and with whatever objective they are destroyed, it is a meritorious act for the Muslims. Before the *kafir* was killed, I had seen in a dream that the Emperor of the day had destroyed the crown of the head of *Shirk* (infidelity). It is true that this infidel was the chief of the infidels and a leader of the *kafirs*.¹⁷

Guru Arjun Dev, on the other hand, resolutely and boldly faced horrible persecution, setting thereby an example to the rest of the world as to how a man of God should mock death; and declaring at the same time:

None is our enemy, nor is anyone stranger to us.

*We are in cordial accord with one and all.*¹⁸

His execution, instead of leading to the desired extermination of the Sikh religion, proved, according to Syad Mohammad Latif, "a great turning point in the history of the Sikh nation."¹⁹ It led to far-reaching consequences, set the phenomenon of martyrdom in its course and went a long way in transforming the character of the Sikh movement and giving rise to a glorious saga of untold sufferings and unprecedented sacrifices for safeguarding the faith and defending the basic human rights, proclaiming in his unforgettable words,

The gracious Lord has now promulgated his Ordinances:

None shall domineer over others or cause pain to them.

*All shall abide in peace and joy as the governance shall be gentle and compassionate.*²⁰

5

The martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev was followed by that of his own grandson and the Ninth Nanak, Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675), who too laid down his life in 1675 at Delhi under the specific orders of Jahangir's grandson, Emperor Aurangzeb (1618- 1707)²¹ "whose efforts," according to Syad Muhammad Latif, "were directed to converting the whole world to the Mahomedan faith" and unsuccessfully "urged the Sikh Guru to embrace Mahomedanism."²² The Guru died most valiantly at the altar of *dharma* for raising a forceful voice against the Emperor's religious fanaticism, communal bigotry, persecutory zeal, repressive policies and tyrannical rule.

on a comprehensive scale to annihilate all traces of diversity among various culture-groups and eliminate Hinduism altogether²³ in a deliberate effort to change, thereby, the entire face of the Sub-continent into a Muslim State.

Guru Tegh Bahadur himself volunteered to sacrifice his life in order to defend the fundamental rights of the people, to protect their faith and belief and to vindicate by his heroic action the freedom of conscience and worship which were being denied to them. He embodied in himself the undaunted spirit of supreme sacrifice in the pursuit of such lofty ideals and eternal values by which humanity must always live, described as under by Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), the illustrious founder of the Khalsa:

The Divine Master (i.e., Guru Tegh Bahadur) protected their²⁴ religious right to apply frontal caste-marks and wear sacred threads²⁵

*He performed thereby a great feat in this Age of Darkness. He went to the utmost limit²⁶ for the sake of the men of faith. He gave away his head without uttering even the whisper of a groan. He endured this unique martyrdom for the cause of Truth and protection of Faith. He readily offered his head for sacrifice but did not give up his ideal and conviction...*²⁷

Breaking the Potsherd of his body on the head of the monarch of Delhi,²⁸

He departed for the Abode of God. No one has ever performed a deed as noble and great as Tegh Bahadar²⁹

Guru Tegh Bahadur's only son and the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh, his four princely grandsons, five beloveds, forty liberated souls and thousands of other noble, devoted and steadfast men and women followed the trail blazed by Guru Arjun Dev's great and matchless martyrdom. In the face of unspeakable sufferings and supreme sacrifices, they kept their faith unsullied and the Sikh spirit undefiled under the most trying circumstances, praying and singing in chorus:

Let my life go, let my body perish

But let not my faith shake or shatter.³⁰

6

If this is correct that "the martyrs of a religion usually arise from persecution" and that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church" Sikhism and its tradition of martyrdom is a superior and

standard example of this unique phenomenon of human nature. Hence, says Dr. Geden:

“Perhaps the most striking example in India of the effect of a cruel persecution in consolidating and defining the religious life of a country, is that of the Sikhs... who found themselves brought into conflict with the dominant power of the Mughal emperors and were forced, in self-defence, to take up arms and maintain their existence and religious liberty... They were confronted with the alternative of acceptance of the formula and creed of the ruling faith or destruction. They refused to submit to either, but endeavoured rather to maintain their freedom and rights with the sword. The persecution which ensued had the effect of welding a community and organisation, in its origin purely religious, into a militant order and nation of soldiers, tenacious of military might and norms no less than of creed and faith.”³¹

Thus, the martyrdoms of Guru Arjun Dev (in 1606), Guru Tegh Bahadur (in 1675), Guru Gobind Singh's 4 princely sons (in 1705) and his own life-long struggle and martyrdom (in 1708) as well as those of their hundreds of thousands dedicated disciples, ever since, have made a lasting imprint on the Sikh concept, doctrine, object and idea of martyrdom as exemplified by Guru Arjun Dev, and have also set such examples for the mankind, in general, and the Indians, in particular, which are unparalleled in the religious, ethical and social chronicles of the world.

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ਇਤੁ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪੈਰੁ ਧਰੀਜੈ ॥ ਸਿਰੁ ਦੀਜੈ ਕਾਣਿ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p 1412.
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ਮਰਣੁ ਮੁਣਸਾ ਸੂਰਿਆ ਹਕੁ ਹੈ ਜੇ ਹੋਇ ਮਰਨਿ ਪਰਵਾਣੈ ॥ Ibid., p 579-80.
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ਆਗਿਆ ਮਹਿ ਭੂਖ ਸੋਈ ਕਰਿ ਸੂਖਾ, ਸੋਗ ਹਰਖ ਨਹੀ ਜਾਨਿਓ;
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 27. In the freedom of conscience and worship for everybody.
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 ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਸੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਆ, ਕਰੀ ਨ ਕਿਨਹੂੰ ਆਨਿ ।
 30. A very popular adage usually sung in a chorus by the Sikhs while preparing or heading for a morcha or a movement. ਜਾਨ ਜਾਇ ਤਾਂ ਜਾਏ, ਮੇਰਾ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਸਿਦਕ ਨਾ ਜਾਏ ।
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□

*A wise traveller, knowing himself to be a guest,
 Does not engage himself in contentions.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 148

ਵਾਟ ਨ ਕਰਈ ਮਾਮਲਾ ਜਾਣੈ ਸਿਹਮਾਣੁ ॥

FIVE 'KHANDS' (REALMS) OF JAP JI

DR JAGJIT SINGH*

In Guru Nanak Sahib's *bani*, Jap Ji, *pauri* (stanza) 34 to 37, there is mention of five regions or domains in which different intellectual and spiritual states of man have been described. In the course of his journey in the world man passes through various happenings, gains many experiences, tries to know and understand the visible creation, and observes and enjoys its immensity and infinity. He is all awe and wonder at the sight of the remarkable miracles of nature and seeks to know about its Lord Creator. The journey through this empirical world and the curiosity to delve deep into its mysteries gave birth to many scientists who shared with mankind whatever knowledge they could gain and garner about this vast universe. But man's journey is not confined only to the visible world; there is much which happens in his inner being too. In his visible physical body are mind or heart, intelligence and reason. The holy men also perceive the soul which is lodged in the innermost being, which is a part of the Supreme Soul, Lord God, the Transcendent One, who is Eternal, True, Pure, Immaculate and Omnipotent. The soul is the God whose being is the cause of the existence of all physical forms and creatures. This is the moving or activating Force behind all. It is this spiritual realization which is the goal of human life and endeavour, and this realization or experience is possible only through the Guru, perfect Holy Preceptor. The Guru's edict is:

Amongst all there is light and that light art Thou.

By His light, the light shines within all the souls.

By Guru's teaching the Divine light becomes manifest.¹

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Without the inner (spiritual) journey and experience of the Divine Light, the outer physical life and world-journey, and knowledge of creation is incomplete. It is man's destiny and his successful sojourn and journey in the world which are described in the entire *Gurbani*. 'Jap Ji' is regarded as the quintessence of the entire *bani* enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. In the 'five regions' are mentioned the first and last stages of this journey.

The five domains sequentially mentioned are:

Dharam khand (Realm of righteousness or moral living),

Gyan khand (Realm of knowledge),

Saram khand (Realm of spiritual effort),

Karam khand (Realm of grace), and

Sach khand (Realm of Truth or Eternity)

The 'Domain of *Dharma*' (righteousness) is the first stage of this journey. Man's eyes open to the world outside. The open eye spies the earth, the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars, air, water, fire, etc., and their knowledge and experience man gains as per his need. On the earth are visible greenery and vegetation, the various living creatures, birds and animals, and different kinds of activities going thereon. Also visible are the seas, the rivers and the mountains. In the midst of this environment, man fashions his destiny. Using his intellect, he understood the forces of nature and harnessed them for his use. As a consequence thereof, today's society and civilization came into being. All the bodily comforts are the outcome of such efforts of man. But inspite of these acquisitions or achievements, man is not contented. He does not have inner happiness and freedom from worries. Even people of rich countries are physically and mentally unhappy. Inspite of outward progress, enmity, hostility and fighting continue to exist in the world, among countries and among men. Today terrorism is reigning supreme. *Lakhs* of precious lives are being lost for nothing. A spiritualist attributes this state to only one cause that man has not understood and explored his destiny. Saints, sages, holy men, ascetics and Gurus (holy preceptors) understood, explored and experienced the true nature and goal of man through rigorous spiritual endeavour and described it in their writings. Sri Guru Granth Sahib is a compilation of such *bani*. According to *Gurbani* (writings enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib), God is the creator of all men. One God alone is the mother, father,

friend and brother of all mankind. The divisions into countries are artificial and are designed for administrative convenience only. Enmity, hostility and hatred on the basis of caste, religion, affluence and poverty are contrary to man's destiny, his progress, peace and prosperity. The realization of God's existence is the key to man's successful and meaningful sojourn and journey in the world. It is such an experience and realization that Guru *ji* is describing in his *bani*, Jap Ji, and the 'five *khand*s' mentioned therein.

In *Dharam khand* (realm of righteous action) is mentioned man's true religion or duty, the real goal of his life. Here a correct direction has been given to his life's journey in the world. In this *pauri*, there is mention of the Divine law that works in the world and the entire cosmos. The knowledge and understanding of this law directs man's journey on the right path, as a directionless man, living in a state of ignorance, goes astray and becomes the cause of pain and suffering, both unto himself and others. Guru *ji*, while showing the path to man, explains to him the all-pervasiveness of the Divine Law: that this universe was created in obedience to God's Will, the Divine Ordinance. In this sphere of nights, seasons, lunar days, week days, etc., the five elements of air, water, fire, etc., are regulating the conduct of man's life. In this endless expanse of regions and universes is established the earth, which may be taken as a holy inn for man to lead a life of righteous action for the achievement of his goal. All the regions, universes, air, water, fire and creatures are the creation of that God and act in obedience to His Will:

"(God created) night and day, seasons and occasions (lunar days and weekdays) wind, water, fire and nether-regions.

In the midst of these He established the earth, the place for righteous action.

The establishment of the earth and the creation of multitudinous creatures took place in accordance with God's Will or command and all of them act in obedience to His Ordinance.

The entire creation including man are functioning in obedience to the Divine Ordinance. He who acts in accordance with God's Will or law is happy and peaceful; he who does not obey it, is unhappy himself and makes others also unhappy. The next principle of *Dharam khand* is:

Men are judged according to their deeds and actions.

The Lord Himself is true and true is His court.³

That is, the fate of man living on this earth is to be written and accounted for in accordance with his deeds or actions. As he sows, so does he reap. Every action's reaction is taking place spontaneously. Every man is all the time active in thought, speech or action. It is the *karmas* (deeds of previous births) that build proclivities, and from proclivities is built one's nature or temperament, under the influence of which man remains busy in performing good and bad deeds. This too is a part of God's play or Divine Ordinance.

That is, the noble souls accepted and approved in His True Court are honoured there. The Lord's elect having become worthy recipients of His grace, receive the mark of Divine grace. Man's worship, the goodness and badness of his deeds are known, examined and judged in the True Court. It is only on reaching there that its mystery is revealed. The True Court has been mentioned in very clear and forceful words, which cannot be ignored. Those living within the bounds of intelligence or intellect, the so-called scholars lacking spiritual experience and living in the three dimensional empirical world of time and space cannot fathom the strange ways and doings of the Supreme Being, who is free from and above these bounds. How simple and easy it is to deny its existence! The description of the 'True Court' given by spiritually enlightened holy men like Bhai Vir Singh is nearer the truth. This description is available in '*Rana Surat Singh*'. The shape and character of the saints who are accepted and approved in this Court, has been described in the first 33 stanzas of the Jap Ji. Such Divine Name practitioners, after passing through the stages of first 'hearing God's Name, then believing in the Name, and finally loving the Name of God' attain to the state of the saints and are blessed with acceptance or approval. In *Gurbani*, while describing *dharma* (justice and righteousness), this human carnation has been mentioned as the place or opportunity for moral living or righteous action.

This body we have got to practice righteousness, to climb the steps of moral duty and righteous action through Divine Name recitation and meditation. Our entire surroundings and environs – air, water, fire, sun, moon, regions and universes – are functioning
 ▼ ◯ ▲ that is, they are all doing their assigned duties.

Similarly, it is man's duty to act in obedience to God's will or command. Such knowledge and understanding is granted in the *Dharam khand* (realm of righteous action).

The next stage of the Lord's elected saints approved in the realm of righteous action is *Gyan khand* (realm of enlightenment and spiritual knowledge). It is the region of God's eternity and endlessness. The *Dharam khand* (realm of righteous action) makes mention of earth's air, water and fire. But *Gyan khand* (realm of knowledge) has several regions and there is reference to 'good many winds, waters, and fires'. Our earth is a *Karam bhoomi* (realm of action). Within the range of the realm of knowledge are 'many earths and mountains (fields of action) for doing virtuous deeds, countless Dhruvs and many the sermons delivered to them. 'In *Gyan khand* (realm of knowledge), the *panch* (saint-elect) experience God's greatness and infinitude. Here many Krishnas, many Shivas, many Brahmas and numberless Indras creating and executing their countless designs under God's Ordinance, accomplished yogis, many enlightened ascetics and sages, and many oceans harbouring precious gems come within the experience of the saint-elect. He has a glimpse of God in the vastness of the His creation and marvels at it with loving devotion. He has a real and positive experience of 'God abiding in His creation and wonders at it'

Gyan Khand is the region of the light of knowledge where man is blessed with a real and clear glimpse of God's vast creation and infinite expanse. Scientist's telescopes too have proved to be useful in getting some such glimpse but the scientific research of hundreds and thousands of years has succeeded in knowing only a fraction of this vastness and immensity. But a spiritual devotee attaining to the position of the saint-elect spontaneously gets a real and true glimpse of this vastness, and experiences many other blissful spectacles and ecstatic unstruck Divine melodies.

This enlightenment is the knowledge of the vastness and animation of God's creation, as well as of the strange miracles being wrought and blissful mystic melodies being played in the cosmos. It is an inner spiritual illumination which is attained due to proximity with God. It is owing to nearness to God that He reveals Himself to the devotee and bestows the knowledge of His creation on the corporeal being of the saint-elect.

Due to the endeavours of the practitioner in the *Dharam khand* (realm of Righteous action) does he gain entry to the *Gyan khand* (sphere of knowledge). When the Divine-Name practitioner attaining to the position of the saint-elect enjoys wondrous sights and spectacles of God's vast creation, both within and without, then his longing for having a glimpse of *Sach khand* (realm of Truth or Eternity) becomes very strong and intense, and he gets prepared to undertake spiritual endeavours with all his might.

Saram khand (realm of spiritual endeavour) is the region of Divine Name quest, meditation and attainment in which the saint-elect endeavours to advance further with full devotion, diligence and preparedness. He is filled with an over-riding desire to achieve his goal. All this is dependent not on his 'ego' but on the 'Guru'. Now no worldly attraction or attachment can prevent him from pursuing his goal. With the strength and firmness of his belief, he advances towards union with God through persistent spiritual endeavour. He gets ecstatic bliss from this endeavour. Beauty is the chief goal of this realm. Through Divine Name meditation is forged the seeker's extremely beautiful form. Those who reach here, their consciousness, wisdom, mind and understanding become clear, pure and beautiful in the holy mind. Serenity, tranquility and ecstasy come to abide in their mind. In this region are bestowed the discerning understanding and lofty consciousness of gods and mystics. It is very difficult to describe it.

From the purified mind and understanding is revealed the realization that the next journey to the *Sach-khand* (realm of eternity) is that of God's grace alone. Begging for the Divine grace, he (saint-elect) becomes an image of 'grace' and enters the realm of the Lord's grace. In this domain abide warriors and heroes, valorous and courageous in meditating on God's Name.

In this realm, there is no room for the double-minded, wavering, immature and weak. This place is meant for those who have attained to God's grace after rigorous and sedulous spiritual endeavours.

In the *Karam khand* (realm of grace) abide the heroes with such radiant faces in whose hearts is lodged the omnipresent God. These great heroes have known and realized the truth and have been tested as genuine on the touchstone prescribed in *Gurbani* — *True should be known such a one as in heart bears truth*. Their mind or heart is ever sewn

with, that is, absorbed in singing God's laudations; their beauty is indescribable. Such brave warriors, saints, holy men having the good fortune of receiving God's grace are beyond the limits of time; they are neither born, nor do they die; they are never beguiled by cheap mammonic miracles; that is, they have crossed through the stage which can tempt them towards decline and fall.

The next view about this region is that here abide devotees assembled from various universes. In their heart is lodged the True Lord, and they enjoy the bliss of this union (with God) for ever. *Tithey bhagat wasey kay loa'* clearly means that in the cosmos there are many such universes, planets and earths, where there is life, where abide saints and sages absorbed in God's devotional worship, who have attained to the lofty stages described in the *Karam khand* (realm of God's grace).

The 'realm of Grace' is within us too, and there is possibility of the existence of such a region in the material world also, where souls in receipt of God's grace abide.

Tithey bhagat wasey kay loa' (the saints of various worlds dwell there) hints at the existence of such a world.

Only a spiritually accomplished holy man can decide it on the basis of his experience. But one could not deny the possibility of its existence. The life and conduct of the souls abiding here is different from that of the mortals inhabiting this earth.

The next region is the *Sach-khand* (realm of Eternity or Truth), which is the personal abode of God, the Formless One, from where He spies the cosmos after having created it, administers or directs His creation according to His will, preserves it, casts His glance of grace on it and finds joy in it. For doing all this, He does not have to make any special efforts, nor does He take any specified period of time. As per the Guru's edict – *With one word Thou didst effect the world's expansion* – all this creation is the outcome of just one thought or note. With this thought or Word, countless realms, regions and universes are getting created which are beyond computation. In this infinite creation are included innumerable men, countries and countless creatures living there, which are very difficult to describe. All this creation is functioning under the Divine Ordinance. The Formless One sees the entire creation engaged in activity and feels delighted. Guru Sahib says that this is the

very difficult to describe. All this creation is functioning under the Divine Ordinance. The Formless One sees the entire creation engaged in activity and feels delighted.

He is the Maker, the Creator. He creates. His role or form has not changed unlike milk, which on changing into curd ceases to exist; that is, milk ceases to be milk. This is not so in the case of God. After effecting creation, God sits and watches alone, and preserves and nurtures it. He is present in the creation as well as distinct. The universe has been created out of God; He Himself pervades it, but He is not creation alone. The creation is His wondrous play and sport. In fact, He Himself is everything.

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ਗੁਰ ਸਾਖੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਪਰਗਟੁ ਹੋਇ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p 663
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ਤਿਸੁ ਵਿਚਿ ਧਰਤੀ ਥਾਪਿ ਰਖੀ ਧਰਮਸਾਲ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p 8
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p 7

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*Why may one grumble or argue with Him
Who, being omniscient, knows all and everything ?
He alone is the Master
Whose decree is unchangeable and unchallengeable.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 1239

ਤਿਸੁ ਸਿਉ ਕੈਸਾ ਬੋਲਣਾ ਜਿ ਆਪੇ ਜਾਣੈ ਜਾਣੁ ॥
ਚੀਰੀ ਜਾ ਕੀ ਨਾ ਫਿਰੈ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਸੋ ਪਰਵਾਣੁ ॥

MOTIVATION IN RELIGION

SARDAR GAJINDAR SINGH*

From the dawn of civilisation, the Masters, who were all keen scholars of human psychology, came to know the weaknesses and strengths in the nature of man. Left to him, man is capable of following the road to disaster. His penchant for easy and cheap solutions at the risk of quality and efficiency ends in adoption of mediocre standards. But for the intense efforts of the teachers, man would have been living like animals of the jungle and behaving like all other creatures, working only for food essential for keeping alive, some sort of habitat to keep out the cold and heat and barest minimum body coverage. That this is true of many primitive societies still in existence in isolation in many parts of the world, justifies such apprehensions. The masters have done an extraordinary job in leading mankind to severe tests of perseverance and determination. History of the past civilisations builds up a continuous series of up-gradation of the quest of man, always for better than before.

More capable the Master, less the temptations, allurements and fanciful avidity of rewards in lieu of living up to the prescribed code of conduct by adherents, inducing them to undergo sacrifices and hard living here and now. In order to attract followers, the past Masters found it necessary to build up dreams of luxuries and comforts after death. This *modus operandi* was in vogue in one manner or other in all bygone societies, which yielded place to inducements to opt for undertaking the cause in more frenzy and hypnotic fury.

In the modern idiom it is called the motivation theory. All ancient religions have continued to exist and inspire mankind with myths about rewards with frills to enthuse and arouse the dormant energies of

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people, to create heroes. While opposing each other, both sides dangle 'rewards' to push their followers into battles and certain death. The question is why a man should lose his neck or at least some limb or other in a cause which he understands not in the least, and action which has no concern with him and his immediate environs and dependents. Intoxicants have been used to benumb the soldiers to concentrate on fighting. At crucial times, the commanders address the men in passionate terms to enthuse them to action. Many a time, even in inferior numbers, man has built confidence in himself that he is going into battle for a righteous cause and sure victory.

Guru Nanak called on the Sikhs to enter his path fully committed and in pure devotion so that there was no retraction. Significantly, there was no recompense or promise of a prize in return. The Gurus rather warned of the difficult journey ahead and encountering of hardships. It was all to be endured for total love of the Master's philosophy. The enlightenment eliminated the dark recesses in the mind so that one never reverted to the mist of ignorance. The mind's illumination was prize enough to live and die for. To those who chose to be adherents of the faith of the Sikhs, love of the Guru and *Gurbani* was more than enough recompense to sacrifice, without eyeing an entry ticket to paradise or escape from the raging fires of hell, or, alternately, from the pangs of rebirth. In Sri Guru Granth (page 178) in Raga Gauri Gwareri, the Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjun Dev strikes an interesting posture about the fate of man:

*Those who died have slipped into oblivion,
Who replaced them are ready to depart.*¹

There is no mention about any threat of rebirth and misery waiting in any hideous form in the case of the departed, nor others standing ready to go. It is a plain narration of life and death happening in our daily experience. In contemporary idiom, the Master continues the *gur-sabd* in vivid description, as under:

*I manage it, I solve problems',
It is my land, who dares enter it'
I am wise, clever and intelligent'
The fool does not decipher the Causation!*²

Daydreaming, wishful thinking, effortless desiring give vent to the human condition. In the ancient faiths it was claimed that

mere concentration on the idol or an insignia of god penetrated into the innermost core of spiritual awakening and all desires were fulfilled, one's own or on behalf of others. Firstly, such magical formulae are fertile imaginings of a daydreamer or a charlatan faking holiness, and secondly, the misinformation continues due to wistful hankering of the common person fed on fanciful imagination. The priests of all faiths freely encourage it and practise it. People have been thronging the tombs of *fakirs* and abodes of holy men believing in their spiritual prowess of what they are unable to do by themselves. Generations of people universally have had faith in the spirits of their ancestors and dead saints for protection and solutions. There is an elaborate system of ghosts of yore and it is almost a science to utilise them for desired results. *Tantrics* still flourish on that premise among Hindus, Buddhists and Islamic Sufis and Yogis. Dissatisfied spirits, the *bhutas* and *pret atmas* are harnessed in a belief of providing relief to living human problems. It is categorised as Black Magic. People will go to any extent of short cuts to find relief. But magic is only an art form of make-believe and mass hypnosis. Miracles are not easily acquired by human endeavour alone but by divine dispensation. True miracles are a rare phenomena and not within easy competence of those who may spend their lives in perfecting a *sidhi* or two, by meditation and penance. The Sikh preceptors were positive about attaining spiritual efficacy only by the process of *khave* and *bhunche* in the case of each individual.

*In this salver are laid three articles,
Truth, contentment and contemplation,
Included in it is nectar of Lord's Name,
On which each and everything is based,
Whoever takes and absorbs it is benefited.³*

The Sikh Masters have repeatedly clarified that it is essential that everyone labours to attain one's objectives. Proxy is not accepted, even if it be of a prophet or intermediary. Guru Nanak says in *Jap: Vin gun kite bhagat n hoe*. "Without (cultivating) qualities, devotion is not (possible)". The cynics tauntingly say that popularity of the holy men's prayers and blessings are based on a formula of fifty-fifty *aves* and *nays* in any situation. However, it is customary to highlight the *aves* while *nays* are overlooked. The perfidy of those who only arrange

- ☞ readings by hired hands, more so, for some gainful purpose, of the Holy Guru Granth Sahib is unpardonable. It is not only without spiritual merit or any magical results but a grievous insult to the sacred *gur-sabd* and contrary to *gurmat*. It is an imitation of the ancient ritual of Vedic *yagna* and reminiscent of the incessant reading of the *Ramayana*, *Gaytri mantra* or the *Koran* and *Torah* in the Semitic tradition. It is believed as meritorious in their cases, based on their faith. Imitating these rituals is definitely not approved by the Sikh Gurus.

Everyone may utter name of God, it matters not,

By the Grace of the Lord, it dwells in mind,

- ☞ *Then only one reaps the benefits.*⁴

When people earnestly desire to upgrade their spiritual condition, they undertake to abide by code of some sort and meditate on the name of God. The exercise may last for a few minutes daily, may be hours, when spiritually recharged, the person sails forth to resume worldly pursuits as heretofore, programmes in which conceit, greed, avarice and lies are inherently employed. There is distinctly different behaviour and attitude for the worldly and divine, like a person with split personality. Such a person thinks he is doing his duty by his god as well as his profession. He does not halt even for a second in changing his stance from spiritual to mundane. This attitude primarily has the stamp of approval of his faith and cohorts and gives him a sense of fulfilment. One finds a person muttering divine hymns while committing worst of crimes. The dacoits have a tradition of praying at their favourite temples and *dargahs* before embarking on murderous assignments. Such nefarious activities are termed as business deals as usual. These persons eventually turn insensitive to their social obligations and become utterly selfish and ruthless in their behaviour. Kabir had a dig on such characters, describing them as *thugs*. There can be no spiritual value of austerities undertaken meticulously to harm others.

- ☞ Without practising truthful conduct, high rewards cannot be obtained by merely reading scriptures with elaborate rites and rituals, meditating and by hypnosis or austerities of *Hath yoga*, *sadhna* to master *sidhis*. Instead, *gurmat* is specific about the right conduct as the only way to salvation.

*Abandon trash, go for truth,
 Achieve all you wish for,
 Rare are traders of Truthfulness,
 They do business with profit.⁵*

Pray, how long will a reward be the sole objective of truthful behaviour? Why is peace and pleasure of being truthful not sufficient? True actions and just performance always herald a happy social order. It is not necessary to dangle rewards at each step as the only means to motivate man and contain avarice and villainy of common people. One is apt to question the hypothesis that man by nature is insincere and greedy and would not be inspired to good deeds except by way of reward and recompense for actions, good and bad. The Semitic assumption of the initial Sin leads to such a conjecture. It is not very far from the Indian *karma* philosophy except for the part of transmigration of soul. This postulation raises a sensitive query that could change the face and the content of most of the established religions. It may nullify notions which are the bed-rock of firm faiths, their sacred dogmas, mythologies and the very logic of the limits of life and after-life.

If we hold humanity as a bunch of faithless scoundrels, habitually lured by cupidity, anger and lust, how would we account for the golden period of Emperor Ashoka when people never locked their houses and shops and crime was at the lowest? By nature he was as ruthless a tyrant as any other monarch with imposition of strict laws. He had captured the throne by butchering his family members. There are other periods of peace and tranquillity in world history when transgression was at the minimum. It was not due to installing the horrors of hell and lure of heavens or intricacies of transmigration theory, but by adoption of a culture that would endure. As a rule, society deteriorates due to bad State rule and weak administration. In such conditions, building of a robust culture is a Herculean task.

Guru Nanak divided people in groups of good and bad. He said that the good people are like good coins, which are accepted everywhere and the bad ones meet the fate of counterfeit coins, universally rejected. He preached to adherents of all faiths to adopt truthful behaviour as the only yard-stick to measure one's honesty of purpose and respect

in society. That was enough to keep a person on the right path and enjoy the mystique of godly love for entire creation, wishing well to all.

*What love is it which flits from one to the other?
Nanak, pick a true lover, ever merged in true worship.*⁶

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*The true Sanyasi is the one
Who renounces desire
And sheds all hopes.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 356

ਆਸ ਨਿਰਾਸੀ ਤਉ ਸੰਨਿਆਸੀ ॥

SIKHISM

SARDAR JASLEEN SINGH*

Sikhism, the fifth largest religion in the world, was founded during the fifteenth century in Punjab, India, by a man named Nanak, who would later be called Guru Nanak. The social environment into which Guru Nanak was born was a time of havoc and violence caused by Islamic rulers who strived to convert India into another Muslim country as they had done with Arabia, Iraq, and Turkey, to name a few. These Muslims had attempted, in vain, though they did manage to convert a number of people, because the inhabitants of the country who were largely Hindus reverted back to practising their own religion. This following of one religion in public but practicing of another in private indicated that falsehood had taken the place of religion. The people of India needed a system of thought in which they could find a sense of religious liberty, social equality, and brotherhood for all, thus setting the mindset needed for the acceptance of the message of Guru Nanak. The principles presented in Sikhism both encompass and reject some of the main beliefs of Hinduism and Islam in order to create a religion that transcends the limitations of both.

Some of the Muslim and Sikh ideas were quite similar. The number one and probably the most important aspect of both Islam and Sikhism was that they are monotheistic and believe in giving absolute submission to the will of God. Muslims, according to the *Koran*, believed that God was commanding, forbidding, rewarding, and punishing. These definitions gave a human-like quality to God unlike the words used to glorify God through a Sikh's eyes: fearless, hateless, omnipresent, and neither created nor destroyed. The monotheistic

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beliefs of Islam and Sikhism were coupled with their shared requirement of meditation. Muslims repeated Allah, while Sikhs recited *Waheguru*. In Sikhism, this essential part of life, which was called *naam japo*, was normally stated along with *kirat karo*, meaning work hard, and *wand chhako*, or share earnings with the poor and less fortunate. The principle of *kirat karo* encompassed the ideal of honesty and, therefore, can be compared to the Islamic obligation of acting righteously and discouraging others from acting immorally. Yet, Sikhism, did not always agree with what Muslims believed was moral.

Sikhism strongly disagreed with Muslims' treatment of women as well as their use of *jihad*. One aspect of Islam which Muslims accepted as moral was *jihad*, or holy war. Muslims interpreted their rights to *jihad* as launching campaigns of violence and treachery upon resistant people in order to convert them to Islam. This was what was taking place during the life of Guru Nanak, so his observation of this brutality led Sikhism not to accept having forced conversions. Another idea that Guru Nanak stressed was his belief in equality for not only men, but women as well. Muslims, though they did have a sense of being one's brother's keeper did not include women in this equation, but only their brothers.

Hinduism contained a few appealing aspects, but the only ideal that Sikhism and Hinduism agreed upon was their belief in *karma*, the accumulation of good deeds. Sikhs believed in this in order to get closer to God. Hindus, on the other hand, believed that *karma* would help them ascend the ranks of the caste system after reincarnations, and would eventually lead them to release from the cycle of life. This superficial caste system was rejected by Guru Nanak along with the inferior status of women, and he replaced it by equality for all. Another major difference between Sikhism and Hinduism was that Sikhism was monotheistic while Hinduism was polytheistic. A cause for the rejection of polytheism might have had something to do with how Hindus worship their gods, with idols, when each idol is believed to be the God himself or herself. Guru Nanak believed that idols should only represent the gods, and not be God. This belief was later instituted with the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, which contains the wisdom, ideology and philosophy of the Sikh faith, because these scriptures were meant

to only represent God, not to be worshiped as God, for God is indescribable. Guru Nanak rejected this idolatry along with the various Vedic rituals and occasional asceticism of Hinduism, for they were merely physical aspects of life.

Instead, Guru Nanak believed that meditation, also practised in Hinduism, was the key to becoming one with God. Sikhs repeated the name *Wahguru*, both physically with their tongues and spiritually in their minds. The idea was to ingrain *Wahguru*, or God, into the mind so intensely, that it would always be repeating itself inside the head, adding God to every aspect of daily life. Hindus, on the other hand, recited ancient sacred hymns as well practiced yoga, for it was believed to strengthen the impact of meditating. Yet, in order to read these sacred hymns, they needed to be literate in a language they did not know. A final ideal of Hinduism that could be looked down upon during fifteenth century was that the scriptures were written in Sanskrit, a language that could only be read by the Brahmins, or priests, and not by the common people therefore making Hinduism a religion of the fortunate who were literate. Another problem was stated by Dr S Radhakrishnan, "The Hindu leaders neglected to teach the spiritual realities to the people at large who were sunk in superstitions and materialism" (sikhpoint.com). The Brahmins kept their religious knowledge to themselves and left their people vulnerable to outside influences. Guru Nanak disagreed with this way of preaching and therefore stressed the importance of equality. Though most Hindu beliefs could not contribute to the message that Guru Nanak spread, they did provide a structure that Guru Nanak improved upon.

With the knowledge that some of the Sikh beliefs come from both Muslim and Hindu ideals, one can now deduce which actual beliefs of Sikhism come from which religion and how Sikhism created a new religion that surpassed their limits. Sikhism takes the appeal of monotheism from Islam and couples it with the belief of *karma* from Hinduism, which can be compared to the obligation of good behavior from Islam to create a religion that is pure and righteous. Sikhs substituted worshipping any gods as in Hinduism with a simple of love of God and a sense of equal compassion for

his children, providing a religion that is non-discriminate, an idea emphasized by Guru Nanak in the line: "There is no Hindu, no Mussalman". This inclusive attitude was made tangible with the establishment of *Guru Ka Langar*. *Guru Ka Langar* consisted of a community kitchen that was open to all, where everyone, no matter what caste he belonged to, were made to set down at one level to eat their food. This act demonstrated the equality of all that Guru Nanak strived for as well as the complete rejection of the caste system of Hinduism and the superiority complex of men above women in both Hinduism and Islam. Further, this institution aided Guru Nanak in displaying his piety to God and humbleness to his people, for Guru Nanak himself sat with his followers, washed the utensils and cooked the food, signifying that he was equal to his followers, not above them.

Guru Nanak who observed the Muslim disapproval of the caste system founded *Guru Ka Langar*, he detected their condemning of idolatry and polytheism, and created a religion that was strictly monotheistic, with no *avatars* or reincarnations, and lastly he noted Muslims' dislike of the social disunity among the people of India and therefore stated that all men and women were created equal. Guru Nanak even saw the need of a spiritual leader that could relate to the people for guidance in other religions, so he became that guru, but still retained a meek stature, and often called himself a servant or "slave of God. Sikhism quelled all the wants, needs, and intentions of Hinduism and Islam and exceeded the restrictions they set on themselves with a religion whose only rule was to love God in any way one could. Sikhism presented a belief system that gave guidelines to people on how to deal with all aspects of life, not just the spiritual facet. In a time of civil turmoil, this was the type of religion that India needed; a simple religion that did not have rituals or set instructions to follow. Anyone and everyone could execute the presented guidelines of Sikhism in their own personal way with God, and if they ever committed a wrong, the only people they answered to was themselves and God, for the meaning of Sikh was disciple, a person who is always learning from their mentor God, who takes millions of steps towards that person if that person takes one step towards Him. Sikhism's universal message of brotherhood for all under the belief of one God

offered its followers autonomy for interpretation, therefore clearly going beyond the boundaries of Hinduism and Islam, while providing the fortification needed to withstand any disaster, civil, physical, or mental through love, compassion, humility, and honor.

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*He, who does any deed under force or compulsion
Earns neither any merit nor any obligation on others.
A good and beneficial deed is that
Which is done willingly and with pleasure.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 787

ਬਧਾ ਚਟੀ ਜੋ ਭਰੇ ਨਾ ਗੁਣੁ ਨਾ ਉਪਕਾਰੁ ॥
ਸੇਤੀ ਖੁਸੀ ਸਭਾਚੀਐ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਾਰਜੁ ਸਾਰੁ ॥

MARTYRDOM AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN MY RELIGION

Ms SIMREN KAUR*

Martyrdom in Sikhism is a fundamental concept and represents one of the most interesting concepts in this vast religion. It is a statement of love for *Sikhi*, it is a call for freedom of religion and righteousness, and it is a self-less action for the furthering of humanity.

Martyrdom has been a very real part of Sikh lives since the Martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev Ji, through the wars in 18th Century, past the era of British rule, and even very recently with Bhai Jaswant Singh Khalra, who was opposing ill-treatment of the Sikhs during the pogroms of the 1980's.

This Sikh doctrine has been an integral part of the Sikh religion from the beginning. Contrary to the popular belief that it was introduced with Guru Arjun Dev Ji, it was.

Guru Nanak who spoke to his Sikhs during the 15th Century and still speaks to us today through the Guru Granth Sahib. He says:

"Shouldst thou seek to engage in the game of Love, step into my street with thy head placed on thy palm: While stepping on to this street, ungrudgingly sacrifice your head."

Many religions – Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, the Aztecs – include martyrdom, though most border on selfish sacrifices. Sikhism is the only religion in which the ultimate sacrifice is not a selfish act but martyrdom.

Christianity is based on the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the sacrifice one made for their religion. By the 4th century of the Christian era, the original, very simple expectation that one just naturally died on behalf of Jesus Christ had fully metamorphosed into the idea of

“martyrdom”. Many people began killing themselves with the name of Christ just to reach heaven. It changed martyrdom to more a maniac suicide, in which dying for one’s faith was not just a duty but an honour and a privilege.

For Catholics and many other Christians, martyrdom is considered a “free ride to heaven” under canon law. Every religious movement known to man has seen its adherents suffer and die for the cause, but Christianity and Islam are the two major religions that offer this ironclad guarantee of eternal bliss.

Islam, much like Christianity, raised the idea of martyrdom to a whole new level. Fundamentalist and extremist Islamists believe that they have a moral obligation to *jihad*, which they define as a war to create Islamic nations and expand the scope of the religion using force.

According to the fundamentalist view, martyrdom is the highest privilege of Islam. Enigmatic leaders have long recruited soldiers who would fight to death on the promise of heaven. This is yet another form of suicide masked by the noble name martyrdom.

Death by this so-called martyrdom is advertised in Islam as a much more carnal and appealing concept than the Christian harp-playing eternal chastity-fest, including an eternity of Allah-sanctioned carnal bliss.

In Islam, martyrdom is not for the good of Islam, but to reach heaven. It is a selfish act to reach God.

In India, the vast Hindu culture used different forms of sacrifice. In fact, sacrifice in popular Indian culture is mainly on the offering of animals to a stone deity. Martyrdom never was an issue for Hindus, as most were swayed easily by the governing religion of the time.

This sacrifice of animals is extremely incongruous to Hindu belief. From the Sikh point of view, while many of Indian cults accept *ahimsa* (non-violence and a respect for all life) as a core principle, they indulge in large-scale sacrifice of animals.

Every year at the temple of Bhairon during the fair at Devi Pattan, hundreds of buffaloes, goats and pigs are sacrificed. It is not consistent that those holding a concept of respect for all life can easily discard it to sacrifice so many animals.

Nath practices, too, are similar. In fact, this culture takes sacrifice to a new level.

Many would wrongly believe that this is martyrdom for their religion, but, again, like Christianity and Islam, it is only a selfish pledge to die for God – or Gods and Goddesses – to reach bliss.

Anything that is remotely similar to martyrdom in Hinduism is based on the rationale that life is considered a suffering and sinful, and release from it, “*mukti*” or salvation, is the goal of mankind.

Similar to the Hindu culture, the Aztecs of Mexico also had many gods. In this extinct religion, priests made human sacrifices to make the sun god happy. Aztecs fought in wars to capture men to sacrifice. On God's Feast Day, they killed their slaves for the gods. Human sacrifices were offerings to the sun and the earth, so that food would grow, as if food would not grow without their annual sacrifices.

Priests would dress up as the supreme gods and wait on the top of an extinct volcano. The priest would rip out the victim's heart and roll the bodies down the temple stairs to lie in a heap. Even after that undignified exit from life, most victims were happy to die because they thought they would go straight to heaven. In fact, many Aztecs preferred to die in battle, or as sacrifices, as they believed they would never reach heaven, if they died of natural causes. The Aztecs used human sacrifice to pay homage to their gods.

Though many religions have irrational definitions of martyrdom, one religion is very definite in its concept of martyrdom. The Sikh institution of martyrdom is entirely alien to the method of sacrifice referred to in all these religions.

In Guru Granth Sahib there is a clear condemnation of the sacrifice of animals to propitiate gods. The Guru Granth Sahib records:

“Slaughter of animals you dub as religion - Then brother! Tell what is irreligion? Each killer of animals you style as saints – then who is to be called a butcher?” (p.1103)

In relation to the throwing away of one's life, the Sikh concept is entirely different. Since human life is an opportunity and its goal is to carry out the Altruistic Will of God, the very concept of release from life is rejected. Obviously, removing one's self from existence cannot be a logical or even holy thing to do. It is certainly not better than living a holy life.

“High is truth, but higher still is truthful living” – and not dying.

Sikhism follows a *miri-biri* system. In contrast to religions forcibly

converting thousands, the Guru's hymns say, "one has to live a life of commitment to the cause of love, and in pursuance of it one has to struggle against oppression by the powerful".

Mukti, salvation or 'release' means freedom from egoism, selfishness and individualism, says the Guru. Killing yourself is not the way to achieve righteousness.

Guru Arjun Dev Ji explained true sacrifice and true Martyrdom to Sain Mian Mir, when the Sufi Saint came to meet him in prison. He said, "I bear all this torture to set an example. The true test of faith is the hour of misery. Without example to guide, ordinary persons' minds quail in the midst of suffering. And, if he, who possesses power within him, defends not his religion by open profession thereof, the man who possesses no such powers will, when put to torture, abjure his faith. The sin will lie on the head of him who has the power but showeth it not; and God will deem him an enemy of religion."

It should be clear that in Sikhism the goal is not to attain personal salvation or *Moksha* or 'eternal bliss'. It is instead the perception or recognition of His Will and working in line with its direction.

This state is synonymous with God-realization.

To commit the ultimate sacrifice in Sikhism is not to attain an afterlife in heaven, it is not to rid yourself of your sins, and it is not to seek favour with God. In Sikhism, the ultimate sacrifice is the martyrdom. Martyrdom in Sikhism means to recognise the Will of God. It means that no matter what the perils, you will accept Wahe-Guru's will.

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## RECOGNISING GOD'S WILL

LATE BRIG HARDIT SINGH

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*Jappi* is the prime rubric of Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539), which was composed by him towards the end of his life. It contains the entire Sikh philosophy and Guru Nanak's highest mystic insight and revelation. After portraying the characteristics and attributes of the Supreme Reality in the creedal statement, i.e., the *Mool Mantra*, the opening *sloka* of the *Jappi* describes God as the only True One – the Abiding Reality that is not subject to the ravages of time, and remains True One in all the ages.

In the first stanza (*Pauri* 1) of the *Jappi*, Guru Nanak mentions then current modes of worship for realization of God, such as bathing (in holy places), observing silence, fasting and intellectualism. After rejecting these practices as of little or no value, as these pertain to the physical body and not to the soul, he poses a question – 'How then, can we achieve attunement to the True One (*Sachiara*) and how shall the wall of ignorance or falsehood (*Koor-di-Pal*) be rent apart?' The Guru himself answers it in the next verse – "By living attuned to His Will (*Hukam*) and Pleasure (*Raza*) which is embedded in the core of human conscience or soul."<sup>1</sup>

In the above question and answer serial, Guru Nanak has used four terms, i.e., *Sachiara*, *Hukam*, *Raza*, *Koor-di-pal* (ego) which need explanation before recognizing God's Will imbedded in the human soul.

### ❖ SACHIARA

*Sachiara* means attuned to God, God filled, God inspired, God incarnate with all the godly qualities like truthfulness, compassion, contentment, and nobility.<sup>2</sup> Truthful living and service to His creation

may follow and not precede it – “Truth is higher than everything, but higher still is truthful living”.<sup>3</sup>

Guru Arjun Dev (1563-1606) in his *Sukhmani* (Psalm of Peace) canto – 8 dwells on the qualities and virtues of a *Sachiara*. A few excerpts are given below:

*“He thinks the True One, talks the True One, And sees nothing but the True One anywhere.*

*The God-awakened man lives pure amid the impurities of the world.*

*While always counteracting evil, he keeps himself unsullied.*

*He looks on all with the same benevolence.*

*He possesses his soul uniformly in patience.*

*He is in his nature like the fire that warms and lights and cleans.”*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 272

The ultimate divine aim of human life, according to Guru Nanak, is to become a *Sachiara*. God Himself is *Sachiara*.<sup>4</sup> Those who imbibe the glory of God also become *Sachiara*.<sup>5</sup>

## HUKAM AND RAZA

*Hukam* encompasses Divine Will or Command Divine, Decree, Universal Laws of Nature, Moral Law, Universal Order and Divine Principles. The entire creation is His Divine Will. It is the Divine Will that creates, nourishes, sustains and dissolves the universe. Everything happens as He commands and nothing is beyond His control. Only that which pleases Him comes to pass. God lives in all things and manifests His glory. Whatever appears in action is prompted by His Will, and there is no other doer. The Guru explains His Will in the next *Pauri* II after stressing that “The Will is inexpressible”:

*“By divine command all forms manifest.*

*Unfathomable, unthinkable, is the Lord’s behest.*

*Souls dwell in their bodies by His command;*

*Some lowly, some exalted, and others grand.*

*Divinely ordained, men are made high and low,*

*By His order they live in joy or sorrow.*

*Upon some, by His order, grace is bestowed,*

*While others must tread transmigration’s long road.*

*All of the world by His law are controlled;*

*None can escape His sustaining hold.*

*Nanak says :*

*If man would only embrace God's command,  
Egoless, noble and free would he stand."*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1

(Translation By Swami Rama)

*Raza* like *Hukam* is Arabic. It means consent, acquiesce, submission or resignation to the Pleasure of God. Basically, *Raza* and *Hukam* are almost synonymous, but *Raza* also carries the imprint of Ordainer's Will. Divine *Raza* is not arbitrary or ordinary order, as it also carries His Behest and pleasure to which devotees submit voluntarily and gladly, as they are convinced that whatever God desires is the best and good for them. They keep away their own selfish wishes and cleverness.<sup>6</sup> Living in conformity with and obedience to the Divine Behest is identification and involvement in the Divine Cause. It was under this holy design that Guru Arjun Dev gladly bore all the severe tortures inflicted on him by the Mughal emperor Jahangir. "Sweet is His Will"<sup>7</sup> and "Whatever pleases Him, that alone is good for me"<sup>8</sup> — was his reply to Sain Mian Mir's outcry against the barbarities.

God's ways are inscrutable. Things happen as He wishes. People carry on the work assigned to them as is His Will. The best way to abide by His *Hukam* and *Raza* is to make His Will our own, i.e., we should accept gladly whatever pleases Him. Only those who attune themselves to the Will of God become acceptable for admission into His court.<sup>9</sup> *Hukam* is understood through the grace of God, when a devotee begins to practice the word of the Guru.

### EGOTISM (KOOR-DI-PAL)

The reason for discarding the mortal, mental and intellectual practices like bathing, fasting, etc., is that these are materialistic approaches which provide no strength to the soul, whereas God is moral and spiritual Being. Instead of being of any value, these practices generally lead to egotism. Egotism also arises from a feeling of superiority due to caste, wealth, vanity, power or status. Egotism is a pernicious malady<sup>10</sup> It is the main cause of human suffering. Yet it is the tiny ego granted by the Almighty, which gives us individuality and leads us to action. The inflated ego is an impediment (*koor-di-pal*) which stands in the way of God realization. Its remedy lies when,



through the grace of God, a person's tiny will is attuned to the supreme will by practising the word of the Guru"<sup>11</sup> *Naam* and ego are opposed to each other, the two cannot abide together.<sup>12</sup> Guru Nanak in his *Asa-di-Var* – VII dwells at length on all the aspects of egotism. In one verse of this *Var* he says:

*"By his ego, man degrades himself from the human order,  
Is wise or foolish,  
And loses all consciousness of salvation.  
By the ego, he is in maya self-obscured,  
And goes into lives of different creatures.  
Man can see the gate of heaven only if he understands the self"*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 466

Surrendering the ego to His Will and Pleasure is living in harmony with the source of all the power and might, and that is God. *Gurbani* confirms that ego is the *Koor-di-pal*.<sup>13</sup>

Ego can be harnessed and not all together eliminated by (a) cultivation of humility – "Happy are the meek in spirit, who efface themselves"<sup>14</sup> – b) practicing the Guru's word,<sup>15</sup> and (c) by obeying the Guru's command.<sup>16</sup> Once the fire of ego is extinguished, the gateway to Him opens up and one merges with the Lord.<sup>17</sup>

### RECOGNIZING GOD'S WILL

We have discussed above, who is a *Sachiaara*, his qualities, virtues, his love for God and His creation and his truthful living. Moulding our lives in conformity with and obedience to the Divine Will and Pleasure is the true import of *Hukam* and *Raza*. Ego is the *Koor-di-pal* which separates us from God, and how it can be harnessed has also been examined. The challenge now is to recognize the *Hukam* which is ingrained in our soul.

Guru Nanak in one of his *Gurbani* verses has stated "The *Satguru*, i.e., God had revealed that there is only one *Hukam* and that is *Naam*"<sup>18</sup>. *Naam* mainly implies remembrance of God. In another verse he has further informed that "Remembrance of God, i.e., *Naam* is ingrained in the deepest recess of the mind and body."<sup>19</sup> The specific *Hukam* is thus the Name of God – *Naam*. The *Hukam* also proves its presence in our soul when our conscience sends warning signals against our bad intentions and reflects pleasure at our noble deeds. By listening and

acting on these instructions, a devotee reforms himself to become a better person. Again the *Hukam* manifests itself in another way. Elders have an ingrained wish, or for that matter all human beings desire that their relatives and children are well behaved and obedient to them to win their favour.

The very mission of Guru Nanak was propagation of *Naam*. It is the cornerstone of Guru Nanak's gospel and thrust of *gurbani*.<sup>20</sup> In the *Pauri V* and *VI* of *Jappi* itself, it is said, "O, God, make me realise that may I never forget the One Lord"<sup>21</sup>. In *Pauri XIX*, he says that "Whatever He has manifested is His *Naam*."<sup>22</sup> The exalted status of *Naam* is further stressed in *Pauri XXIV* as "Great is the Lord, high is His seat, most exalted is His *Naam*."<sup>23</sup> Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Enthroned Word, is the repository of *Naam*. Every verse in it exhorts us to constantly remember Him. To Guru Nanak, life is *Naam* and death is in its forgetting.<sup>24</sup> Above all, the original and prehistoric Name of God is *Satnaam*.<sup>25</sup>

Peace here in this world and beyond comes from understanding His *Hukam* of remembering Him.<sup>26</sup> Those who do not obey His *Hukam* remain in pain.<sup>27</sup> Apart, the *Naam* is the only potent detergent that washes the soiled mind of its impurities.<sup>28</sup> Once the mind is cleansed of its impurities by practicing the Guru's Word, the ego disappears and we become *Sachiaras*. *Naam* thus is the *Hukam* ingrained in our soul.

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SIKH MOVEMENT

- A FIGHT AGAINST TYRANNY, NOT TYRANT -

BHAI ASHOK SINGH*

Very often when historical facts are presented in an unbalanced and one-sided manner, these tend to mislead the readers. As a result of these distortions, the very idea and concept behind these facts is changed. This is what seems to be happening with the history of the Sikh Movement.

I feel highly concerned, when I find that history is being written these days in a manner which projects Sikhism and Sikh struggle as anti-Islamic. This is a serious misinterpretation of Sikh principles and the vision of the Sikh Gurus. This could partly be due to the fact that the majority of those who contributed to the sources of Sikh history were non-Sikhs who chronicled the events of Sikh history according to their own fancy and point of view. Very often, the writers of history are influenced by the ruler of the day. This trend seems to have picked more speed recently. This trend is trying to project Sikhism as a sub-set of Hinduism or its revised edition which projects Sikhs in the form of an armed brigade to protect the Hindus. This minimises the universality of Sikhism as a distinct religion with its distinct principles and doctrines. A single line, *Tilak Janju Rakha Prabh Tanka* interpreted in a distorted manner conveys a wrong message. The word *Tanka* is sought to denote a third party or "their" religion. It is wrong to say that Guru Tegh Bahadur protected Hindu religion. He sacrificed his life to defend the right to practise any religion of one's choice or the right of the Hindus to practise their religion. In modern parlance, Guru Tegh Bahadur was a champion of human rights *per se*.

It is due to this concern that I am narrating some of the historic

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happenings of Sikh history, so that basic doctrines and ethos of Sikhism and Sikh religion are properly understood, and Sikhism rid of the subjective mental-constructs calculatedly created by certain historians for their own interests.

Legend goes that when Guru Nanak was born, Daultan, the midwife refused to accept honorarium for her services of midwifery from Mehta Kalu, as she had felt amply rewarded by having a glimpse of the divine radiance on the newly-born offspring. No financial compensation could match the bliss that she had felt during the moment of Guru Nanak's birth. Thus, she was the first to perceive the divinity in Nanak. It was a phenomenon perceived by Daultan – a Muslim lady rather than by Mehta Kalu – a Hindu.

Sikh history begins practically with the advent of the Mughal period. When Babur rounded up some Indians at Eminabad, Guru Nanak was one of them. A similar legend tells that Babur, a Muslim emperor, also saw divinity in Nanak as he found the hand-operated stone grinders (*chakkis*) moving on their own inside the prison. He realised that Guru Nanak was a man of God, and released him consequently. History does not record any major confrontation between the Sikh Gurus and the rulers after that for a long period. Emperor Akbar paid a visit to the third Sikh Guru, Guru Amardas. The visit was necessitated by a series of complaints that Guru Amardas was preaching against Islam in his daily sermons. After his visit, Emperor Akbar was not only satisfied with the falsity of the complaints, but also with saintly conduct of the Guru. So much so, that he offered land for establishing the city (Amritsar) which the Guru graciously refused to accept.

Guru Arjun Dev, while compiling the *bani* of Guru Granth Sahib, included the *bani* of not only the Sikh Gurus and Hindu *Bhagats* but also of Muslims *Fakirs* as well as that of the so-called untouchables. The writings of Muslim men of God, Kabir and Farid, are twice the size in volume than the writings of all other saints taken together. It was, perhaps, because both Farid and Kabir believed in monotheism of God or unity in Divinity : ਤਿਸੇ ਸਰੀਰ ਨ ਕੋਇ - ਵਾਹਦ ਲਾਸਰੀਕ ।

The fifth Sikh Guru, having realised that the Sikhs were then mentally and physically prepared to resist tyranny, gave the Sikh

- movement a tilt towards taking up arms in defence of their religion and protect their faith and themselves against any ideological and physical attack. The following verse from *Gurbani* symbolises this crucial transformation in the mission of Guru Nanak :

ਹੁਣਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੋਆ ਮਿਹਰਵਾਣ ਦਾ ॥ ਪੈ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਕਿਸੈ ਰਵਾਣਦਾ ॥

ਸਭ ਸੁਖਾਲੀ ਵੁਠੀਆ ਇਹੁ ਹੋਆ ਹਲੇਮੀ ਰਾਜੁ ਜੀਉ ॥

- Conflict with the State starts whenever the rulers perceive a defiance of authority in any religious movement. Guru Arjun had extended normal hospitality to Prince Khushro, though a rebel being pursued by Mughal forces, like any other pilgrim, being a man of God in his own right. But this was construed as an act of defiance and collusion with the forces of rebellion against the State. Some historians have accepted it as such, whereas Guru Arjun Dev's gesture should have been interpreted in the proper context keeping in mind Guru Arjun's occupation of the seat of Sikh Gurus known for their cosmopolitan outlook. It is under dictatorship and autocratic rule that people are executed without a fair trial on subjectively perceived grounds of helping a rebel.

- Guru Arjun, while going to the river for his final ablutions, had sent a message to his infant son Hargobind not to mourn his death. Instead, he should sit on a throne fully armed and maintain an army to the best of his ability. The Guru had already entrusted the military training of his son to Baba Budha Ji to make him worthy of occupying a royal throne :

ਤਖਤਿ ਬਹੈ ਤਖਤੈ ਕੀ ਲਾਇਕ ॥ ਪੰਚ ਸਮਾਏ ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਪਾਇਕ ॥

It is again noteworthy that it was through the good offices of a Muslim Sain Mian Mir that Guru Hargobind came to restore harmonious relations with Emperor Jahangir – the killer of Guru's father.

- While in Gwalior prison, a regular listener to Guru Sahib's sermons was the Jailor of the prison. When Guru Sahib was released from there, the jailor requested him to give him some memento to remember the Guru. I was told by the guide in the fort Gwalior, that Guru Sahib gave his *chola* (a loose apparel) to the jailor. On hearing about the demise of the Guru, the jailor buried that *chola* there within the fort and raised a small *mazaar* which still existed there when I visited.

According to Mr M A Macauliffe, at the time of Guru Sahib's

release from Gwalior, Jahangir requested the Guru to accompany him to Kashmir. On the way, at Amritsar, "The emperor asked, May I too behold thy sacred temple," The Guru, seeing the Emperor's friendly curiosity, consented to conduct him to Amritsar. The Emperor sent sacred food and offered to defray all the expenses for the completion of the temple. The Guru, however, wishing to retain for the Sikhs exclusive proprietary rights over it, replied, "The place where the money of one person is spent becometh that person's property. This temple erected to God belongeth to God....." "The Empress Nur Jahan and her co-queens, went again to visit the Guru." They also went to see the temple, and ended by visiting the Guru's mother."

Gurdwara Chhatam Patshahi in Srinagar Kashmir along with the fort built by Jahangir is a living witness to the joint visits of Jahangir and Guru Hargobind to Kashmir. Guru ki Masjid – built by Guru Hargobind for his Muslim soldiers is still there.

Here, the Guru had transformed Jahangir from a tyrant to a friendly ruler.

"Now a few words about the nature of wars fought by the two warrior Gurus. Mohsin Fani, a contemporary of the Sixth Guru, says in his *Dabistan* that Hargobind did not use his sword in 'anger'. "Both the warrior Gurus often declared that their sword would always be used for defence, nor was it drawn against anybody out of revenge. These wars were not communal. Both Hindus and Muhammadans enlisted themselves in the Guru's armies and fought for him. The Guru fought against oppressors of both the communities, Hindu and Muhammadan." – *Philosophy of Sikhism* by Giani Sher Singh

Now there is a lot of controversy being created about Sain Mian Mir's laying the foundation of Sri Harimandar Sahib. Sikh tradition has it that Guru Arjun Dev requested Sain Mian Mir to lay the foundation of Sri Harimandir Sahib. According to a recently published book by Punjabi University, Patiala, written by Dr Mohm. Habib, the earliest reference to Sain Mian Mir laying the foundation of Harimandar Sahib appears in Punjab Notes and Queries (1849-1884) by the then Secretary Municipal Committee, Amritsar, Mr E. Michol. Another reference is to *Umdat-ul-Tawarikh* by Sohan Lal Suri (1885), according to which Guru Sahib himself went to Lahore to bring Sain Mian Mir. Yet another reporting is in *Punjab District Gazetteer*...

Chopra.

According to Giani Gyan Singh, Raja Ram Singh, a General in Aurangzeb's army, requested Guru Tegh Bahadur to accompany him on his expedition to Assam. Guru conceded to the request and accompanied Raja Ram Singh. There were some twenty-five followers with Guru Sahib including Bhai Rup Chand and his son Dharam Chand. Dharam Chand was instrumental in striking a compromise between the Mughal forces under Raja Ram Singh and the ruler of Kamrup (Assam). Roop Chand was left at Patna Sahib to attend to Mata ji.

It is very often said that it was Guru Gobind Singh who transformed the Sikhs into Militants by creating the Khalsa. Here I would like delve deeper into history. Just two points would negate this hypothesis. Guru Gobind Rai's first battle was against Hindu Rajas at Bhangani 13 years before the Khalsa came into being. In this battle, Pir Budhu Shah lost two of his sons and men, fighting along side the Guru.

The places from where the five *piaras* came from (Bhai Daya Singh, a Khatri of Lahore; Bhai Dharam Singh, a Jat of Delhi, Bhai Mohkam Singh, a washerman of Dwarkapuri, Bhai Sahib Singh, a barber of Bidar, Bhai Himmat Singh, a water-career of Jagannathpuri), were never visited by Guru Gobind Rai. These were visited by Guru Nanak. Guru Gobind Singh never said or did anything which one cannot find in the Guru Nanak's *Bani*.

ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ ॥ ਸਿਰੁ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ ॥
ਇਤੁ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪੈਰੁ ਧਰੀਜੈ ॥ ਸਿਰੁ ਦੀਜੈ ਕਾਣਿ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ ॥

ਪਹਿਲਾ ਮਰਣੁ ਕਬੁਲਿ ਜੀਵਣ ਕੀ ਛਡਿ ਆਸ ॥
ਹੋਹੁ ਸਭਨਾ ਕੀ ਰੇਣੁਕਾ ਤਉ ਆਉ ਹਮਾਰੈ ਪਾਸਿ ॥

Those unfamiliar with the Sikh scripture would easily take these lines to be authored by Guru Gobind Singh, as these are in keeping with the martial spirit that was to be given final physical shape by Nanak in the tenth form.

How this commandment of Guru Nanak was followed and put into practice, can easily be seen in 1716 AD. When Banda Bahadur was executed and his 742 soldiers were put to death, not a single Sikh sought pardon.

While initiation of *Panj Piaras* by Guru Gobind Singh indicates

the spirit of the first line of the above quoted verse, the sacrifice of 742 Sikhs along with their leader Banda Singh Bahadur embodies the essence of the second line.

First fight of Guru Gobind Singh was against the Hill Rajas – Hindus. It was at their invitation, that Mughal forces came into conflict to help the Hindu rajas against Guru Gobind Singh.

According to Daulat Rai, "The Second defeat was rankling in the mind of the Rajas. They tried to involve the Subedar of Sirhind fully now. It is said that Rupees twenty thousand were given to the Subedar in cash and Raja Bhim Chand offered him the hand of a female from his family. The Subedar was won over to their side."

When Guru Gobind Singh left the besieged Anandpur fort, it is often said that the Mughal forces violated their oath taken over the holy *Quran*, and attacked the Guru's entourage. But in this betrayal Hindu Rajas also broke their oath taken over the sacred cow.

Nawab Sher Mohammad Khan Maleria, as everyone knows, protested against the execution of innocent Sahibzadas. But few would know that the Nawab did so in spite of the fact that his brother Nahar Khan was killed in the battle of Chamkaur Sahib by Guru Gobind Singh himself. Yet the Nawab remained loyal to the state and fought against Baba Banda Bahadur in which he was slain.

Amongst the weapons of Guru Gobind Singh at Keshgarh Sahib is a *saij*, a sword given by Bahadur Shah to Guru Gobind Singh as a token of thanks for Guru Sahib's assistance in the war of succession. We are told that this *saij* belongs to Hazrat Ali. This shows that Bahadur Shah realized that Guru Gobind Singh was a man of God, worthy of receiving the sacred weapon. He could not have given such a precious relic to an enemy.

After 200 years of armed conflict with the Muslims, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was able to establish a Sikh rule in the Punjab. A most notable character of a devout Sikh comes to notice, as there was no revenge killing of any Muslim, nor any mosque was destroyed or even desecrated. Muslims were amongst his trusted ministers, and negotiators. Sir Lepel Griffin writes in *Ranjit Singh*, "The most conspicuous figure in the eyes of foreigners visiting the court of the Maharaja was Faqir Azizuddin, his Foreign Minister. He, with his

brothers Nuruddin and Imamuddin, descended from a Muhammadan family of Bukhara of great respectability... Trusting implicitly to his good faith, he would leave with his whole army on distant expeditions leaving only the Fakir with a few orderlies for the protection of Lahore. Azizuddin was occasionally employed on military service. Whenever it was necessary to send a special ambassador, as the one to Lord William Bentinck in 1831 and to Amir Dost Muhammad in 1835, the Fakir was always selected and was always equal to exigency." Ilias Khan, Gaus Khan were amongst the generals in Maharaja's army.

Very often Sikhs are accused of not supporting the mutiny of 1857. Just consider the Sikh psyche during that period and the immediately preceding years to understand the Sikh character.

Mutineers were supporting Bahadur Shah Zaffar, a Mughal Emperor, against the British. The Sikhs had fought for over two centuries against his predecessors and bore untold atrocities. The other factor, equally if not more important, was the fact that Sikhs were betrayed in the Anglo-Sikh wars by Misr Tej Singh, Lal Singh, the Bhaiyas of UP. How could Sikhs support those who were responsible for their defeat and loss of their kingdom, and help the Mughal rule whose wounds inflicted on Sikhs were too raw to heal so soon?

"Had Tej Singh attacked the Britishers at Pheroo Shah, the British rule in India would have ended 100 years earlier. There was no movement of troops on 19th and 20th December though both at Mudki and Ferozepur, the adversaries remained very close to each other. The Sikhs used this respite to their best ability by building an earthen defence without guidance from senior officers or expert technicians. Lal Singh conveyed this development to the British through his emissary Shams-ud-din... Even relinquishing his superior civil status as Governor General, he decided to take part in the battle as a second in command to Lord Gough... On the other hand, Tej Singh, with a force of ten thousand under him, remained idle in the neighbourhood of the battlefield absurdly pretending that he was guarding Ferozepur although Littler's force had left the place in broad day light." (Sita Ram Kohli, *Sunset of the Sikh Empire* quoted in *Anglo-Sikh Wars* by Karnail Singh)

Dr Kirpal Singh and M S Ahluwalia in *The Punjab's Pioneer Freedom Fighters*, quote Col G B Malleson who writes, "Then among many panic

who tried in vain to rally his men. The left attack on the Khalsa had failed so signally that it could not be renewed. The Sikh army had repulsed the British attack..... What was more, they had still 10,000 men under Tej Singh. Had a guiding mind directed the movement of the Sikh army, nothing could have saved the exhausted British."

Hence the first real war of Independence of India was lost due to the betrayal of UP Bhaiyas – (Hindustanis). Shah Mohammad had truly written that now war between Hind and Punjab had started.

In 1968, BA history paper of Punjab University had a question maliciously worded. It read, "Give circumstances that brought Guru Gobind Singh in conflict with Aurangzeb and account for his ultimate failure." This is an insinuation that Guru Gobind Singh failed against Aurangzeb. -

Reply to the first part of the question has been given earlier in the words of Dault Rai. As for the second, it would be appropriate to mention what a Muslim writer has to say about Guru Gobind Singh:

ਅਬ ਕੀ ਕਹੂ ਨ ਤਬ ਕੀ, ਅਗਰ ਨਾ ਹੋਤੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਤੋ ਹੋਤੀ ਸੁਨਤ ਸਭ ਕੀ
But for Guru Gobind Singh, all would have been circumcised.

In the end, I would like to say that I am not a historian, but the trend of writing history that I have noticed in the past half a century, has created a lot of wrong impressions about the Sikhs and Sikh mission. I have ventured to put down my ideas in an attempt to say that Sikh mission was not against any religion as such, whether it was the struggle against the Mughals or the British or at present. It had been and is a resistance to tyranny, and injustice, without bothering about the religion of the tyrant.

□

*God's true devotees are those
 Who to have His sight
 Remain obedient to His will.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 465

ਬੰਦੇ ਸੇ ਜਿ ਪਵਹਿ ਵਿਚਿ ਬੰਦੀ ਵੇਖਣ ਕਉ ਦੀਦਾਰ ॥

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF KUKA MOVEMENT

PROF HAZARA SINGH

The Central Government has announced the observance of following events during 2007 :

150th anniversary of the 1857 – Revolt by the Bengal Sepoys of the East India Company on May 10, acclaiming it as India's First War of Independence; birth centenary of Martyr Bhagat Singh on September 27; and Diamond Jubilee of Independence of August 15.

Such celebrations ought to be objectively assessed for imparting their precise impact at the national level.

The terming of 1857 – Revolt (regarded as mutiny by the British) as 'India's First War of Independence' leads to the implied recognition that the earlier invasions from north-west were not acts of foreign aggression but had been a chain of home-coming by the natives despite their being marauders. If this is accepted as a historical fact, then the heroic deeds of Indian patriots and reformers prior to the advent of East India Company would appear as acts of treason. Any resentment against the demolition of religious places would not only be misplaced but amount to sheer vandalism. If the invasions from north-west had been continual aggression then the acclaiming of 1857 – Revolt by a few detachments of Bengal Sepoys as India's First War of Independence is questionable. In fact our approach to historical events had been casual if not distorted. The redemarcation of Bengal into two provinces in 1905 was resented as partition, whereas the separation of Burma from India in 1937 was accepted as a prerogative of the British. It would be worthwhile to note that Lokmanya Bal Ganga Dhar Tilak (1856-1920) who spearheaded a sustained campaign of *swadesi* and

sawraj did not accept the 1857 Revolt as an uprising of the masses, because beyond Mogulserai in the east and Bhopal in the south-west, not a single voice of protest was heard.

The Punjab Government has taken a corrective step by deciding to observe the 150th anniversary of Namdhari (Kuku) Movement at a state-level function at Bhaini Sahib on April 15, 2007. Baba Ram Singh, founder of the Namdhari sect, adored as Satguru (preceptor of truth), had been a soldier of the Khalsa Army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. After the demise of Maharaja in 1839, he felt fed-up by the intrigues of his survivors and their gradual departure from lofty ideals of Khalsa Raj. In disgust, he left the army service in 1845 and returned to his native place, Bhaini, near Ludhiana. But after the annexation of Punjab by the East India Company in 1849, the provocative activities of patronized missionaries and the demoralization of the disarmed Khalsa Army awakened his national pride. He resolved to restore the glorious values of sovereign secular Khalsa Rule. It was on the Baisakhi of 1857, about four weeks earlier than the revolt of Bengal Sepoys on May 10, that Baba Ram Singh founded the Sant Khalsa. It enjoined a strict code of simple pious living attuned to *Naam* (Name of God). The new sect began to be called Namdharis accordingly. As in their ecstasy they often indulged into loud shrieks (called Kukas in Punjabi) the epithet Kuka also got added to Namdhari. Because wearing of *kirpans* was restricted by the East India Company regime, the Kukas began to carry sticks (*lathis*). Mass physical drills formed a part and parcel of their congregations. The Namdharis were the first to start a parallel self-rule by introducing their own postal system for maintaining secrecy about their activities. They settled all mutual disputes through *sabhas* (panchayats) instead of petitioning to courts. Child marriage, infanticide, *sati* and all such practices derogatory to dignity of women were forbidden. Education through mother tongue was encouraged so that the taught got acquainted with their cultural heritage. The campaign was the forerunner of the non-co-operation movements launched by Mahatma Gandhi from 1921 onwards. The British did not take kindly to the growing activities of the Namdharis, as they were reviving the national pride and martial spirit of the ruled.

The opening of a chain of slaughterhouses by the British for providing beef to the colonial army was resented by the Namdharis.

The sentiment for cow-protection was exploited by the British to incite clashes between Namdharis and the local butchers. After one such encounter, sixty-six Kukas were blown off without any trial by L. Cowan, Deputy Commissioner, Ludhiana, on January 17-18, 1872. The executed included Bishen Singh, a teenager, who was hacked to pieces. Baba Ram Singh was deported to Rangoon where he passed away in 1885. As per its aims and goal, the foundation of Sant Khalsa on the Baisakhi of 1857 deserves to be acclaimed as the declaration of India's First War of Independence.



*Let your boat be
Of God's Meditation and pious endeavour.
This will enable you to cross unhampered
The Ocean of Existence.
Your path will thus become so easy
That you shall not have to face a rough ocean
And to contend with its lashing waves.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 729

ਜਪ ਤਪ ਕਾ ਬੰਧੁ ਬੇੜੁਲਾ ਜਿਤੁ ਲੰਘਹਿ ਵਹੇਲਾ ॥
ਨਾ ਸਰਵਰੁ ਨਾ ਢੁਛਲੈ ਐਸਾ ਪੰਥੁ ਸੁਹੇਲਾ ॥

THE PUNJAB WAR OF 1845 AND 1846 AS FIRST WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

DR KIRPAL SINGH*

The Punjab war of 1845-46, misnamed as Anglo Sikh war by the British, is in reality the first war of independence. This war changed the thinking and psyche of the Indian military men who always considered themselves inferior to the British soldiers. The Punjab war broke the invincibility of the British army and proved that Indians were no longer inferior. The revolt of 1857 was inspired by the bravery of the Indian soldiers consisting of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, who had jointly fought against the British in 1845 and 1846. The army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not consist of Sikhs alone. Shah Mohammed, the contemporary writer writes about the Muslims participation in the Punjab War:

*Mazār Ali and Maghe Khan marched out from the city
The brigade of Sultan Mehmood also came out
With invincible Imam Shahi guns in tow.
Elahi Baksh brought out his guns after polishing them.
And showing them worshipful burning sticks.
O! Shah Mohammed in such a way did the Guns shine,
As if these were the flashes of lightening out to dispel darkness.*

All the Punjabis were fighting against the British. The army organized by Maharaja Ranjit Singh was on secular basis and had in it Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus. Only Dogras under Gulab Singh remained aloof, he had his own reasons, as he was intriguing with the British against Lahore Darbar. All other Punjabis fought against the British. Had there been no treachery of Gulab Singh, Tej Singh and Lal Singh, the British would have been defeated. It was this glorious war that inspired not only the Indian soldiers fighting on the British side, but also impressed the Britishers who have written marvellous comments

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on the bravery of their opponents. It may be noted here that this war was being fought against the aggressive policy of the Britishers, the fact which had been admitted by the British writers.

The British had for long been following an aggressive policy towards the Lahore kingdom and ultimately they were the first to violate the treaty of permanent friendship of 1809, signed between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the East India Company, long before the Punjab forces crossed the Satluj. Upholding the position of the Lahore Durbar, Major G Carmichael Smyth, Major in third Bengal Light writes, "We have been told that the Sikhs violated the treaty by crossing the river with their army, but the question... I only ask, had we not departed from the rules of friendship first? The year before the war broke out, we kept the island between Ferozepur and the Punjab, though it belonged to the Sikhs... Regarding the Punjab war, I am neither of the opinion that the Sikhs made an unprovoked attack nor that we have acted towards them with great forbearance. If the Sikhs' were to be considered to have entirely an independent state in no way answerable to us, we should not have provoked them, for to assert that bridge of boats brought from Bombay was not a *casus belli* but merely a defensive measure is absurd."

That the British had been preparing in advance for the eventuality of war, is further proved by following facts:

Till 1838 Ludhiana was the only cantonment of the British next to Lahore frontier with only three thousand men and twelve cannons. By the end of 1838, Ferozepur had been converted into a British cantonment with five thousand men and twelve cannons. Cantonments were also established by the British at Ambala, Kasauli and Simla and fourteen thousand European troops and forty eight cannons were established there. After his arrival in India, Lord Harding further increased the strength of his forces in these cantonments by twenty two thousand men and twelve cannons. Just before the war their total strength was increased to forty four thousand men and one hundred cannons.

There were four battles i.e. Mudki, Pherushah, Aliwal and Subroan. The last was fought on the 10th of February, 1846. About this battle R Bosworth Smith writes, "One chief whose name should be recorded – Sham Singh, among the faithless faithful only found clothed in white and devoting himself to death, like Decius of old

called on those around him to strike for God and the Guru and dealing death everywhere rushed manfully upon his own."

Mohammed Latif writes, "Hoary headed Sham Singh dressed himself in a garment as white as his long snowy beard, galloped forward, cheering on his ardent followers and scorning death till the last fell martyr to his country's freedom. His superb example was a beacon and a source of inspiration of the numerous freedom-fighters who fought against the British from 1846 to 1947."

Sardar Sham Singh, knowing that the 10th of February was going to be the day of battle, rose early in the morning, dressed himself in white, and mounting his white mare proceeded to address the Army. He reminded them about their glorious traditions of bravery and sacrifice in the past, and begged them, as true sons of the soil, to die rather than turn their backs on the enemy. Since he had himself dedicated his life to the sacred cause, his words had the desired effect.

Gilbert's Division led the third charge on the Centre. Mounting on one another's shoulders, the attackers gained a footing on the entrenchments, and as they increased in number, they rushed at the Sikh guns and captured them. Soon the news spread down the line that enemy troops had won their way through to Sikh positions. Sardar Sham Singh, seeing his army facing defeat, took the final fatal plunge.

He spurred forward against the 50th Foot, brandishing his sword and calling on his men to follow him. But soon he fell from his horse, his body pierced with seven balls. He had remained true to his vow to the last. The self sacrifice of Sardar Sham Singh, the hero of Sabroan, had an inspiring effect. His courage and determination had turned Sabroan into the Waterloo of India, as according to Malleeson, victory for the Punjab would have meant to the English the loss of India.

Unfortunately, the British have described this war as war between the Sikhs and the British, which is wrong. The Muslims with the arsenal under their command were fighting most valiantly to preserve the independence of the last Indian kingdom. The war was fought by all Punjabis and their valour encouraged the rising of 1857. This fact is not so well known. So the Punjab War 1845-46 was a real watershed in the ideology of India's fighting forces. It was perhaps due to this fact that some members of the Parliament raised the point that the first war of Independence was the Punjab war of 1845-46.

WAR OF INDEPENDENCE IN INDIA

RABHBIR SINGH*

A few days back some political parties of India with Congress and BJP in the forefront celebrated the 150th year of the so-called 1857 War of Independence. During its celebrations in the Parliament House, the Deputy Speaker, S Charanjit Singh Atwal of the Shiromani Akali Dal interrupted Shri Shekhawat, the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha to remind him that not the year 1857 but the Anglo-Sikh war of 1845 was actually the First War of Independence. He was joined in this claim by three more Sikh MPs. Comments from different quarters on the plea of these MPs have appeared in the media disclaiming Anglo-Sikh war of 1845 as the First War of Independence. According to a report in *Hindustan Times* dated 12-5-07, Dr J S Grewal, former VC, GNDU, says that the participation of Sikhs in 1857 movement being less, the fact of their being patriots has been ignored, and considers that the Sikh MPs are right to this extent. But he does not accept Anglo-Sikh war of 1845 as the First War of Independence, as it was fought only to safeguard the Sovereignty of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Almost similar views have been expressed in this report by Dr Dalbir Singh and Dr Parambakshish Singh of the Punjabi University. Prof Radha Sharma of GNDU, while being silent about the status of 1857 rebellion considers 1845 war a local action of the Sikhs against the British forces. Prof J S Dhanki, and Prof Indu Banga both of PU also of the same view, and call 1857 war as a revolt all over the country. Prof Rajivlochan also of PU is silent about 1845 war, but goes on to say that the first war of independence was fought by the forces of the Nawab of Bengal, Mir Kasim, the Nawab of Avadh and Mughal Empror on Oct 22, 1764, at Buxar to drive off the British from Bengal,

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which of course failed. For him 1857 was only a mutiny in which the Indians savaged the British the most and it resulted in creation of a garrison state and suppression of all civil rights for Indians. Another view often expressed is that there was nothing political about 1857 uprising. It was only a religious cry of UP Hindu and Muslim soldiers against licking the cartridges said to be treated with the cow and pig fat. There was ever no revolt during the oppressive Muslim rule of more than 650 years since 1192. Indian communities had never developed the grit of an independent nation on account of various social and religious practices.

By 1818 British had taken control of almost entire region to the South of River Satluj. Sind also fell to them in 1843. It was only Punjab under the reign of Sikhs, which after decimating the Mughal Raj remained completely independent till 1845 when it was also annexed. The reason for small participation of Sikhs in 1857 protest mostly by Purbia soldiers was not due to any lack of patriotism on their part but it was their grudge against these soldiers who had served the British in 1845 war. Another cause was the Hindu turned Sikh Purbia General Lal Singh who had clandestinely sided with the British forces to stab the Khalsa forces in their back during that war. If Sikhs were not patriots how could they join Indian National Army of General Mohan Singh in large numbers and make more than 80% sacrifices to drive out the British Govt. The only difference of the two wars is that while the war of 1845 was fought by the patriotic Punjabi soldiers whose bravery still resounds in the ears of the enemy, the other war of 1857 was the result of religious exploitation by the ethnic rulers.

The entire Indian Territory had always remained fragmented and was ruled by small different centres of power that were at loggerheads with each other to extend their sway over each other. Being divided, these powers started losing their independence with the defeat of Prithvi Raj Chauhan at the hands of the legions of Ghor in 1192. Even the Mughal Raj which had the largest chunk of India under its sovereignty did not extend to all the territories. Some defeated Muslim and Hindu chieftains in the area around Delhi along with their aristocracy found a golden opportunity in the simmering discontent of the Indian soldiers in the British command against the use of cow and pig fat in the cartridges supplied to them. The revolt of 1857 was

of these disgruntled elements that took advantage of the situation to exploit religious sentiments and beguiled the soldiers of their respective communities to rise against the British. It was like the cat and mouse play. There was no patriotic spirit behind this uprising. It cannot be called a war of the people for independence as they continued to suffer as usual without any one to save their interest from white rulers.

To understand the situation in its right perspective a brief study of the events from 1469 is necessary. It was the advent of Sikh thought which during a period of about 230 years since 1469, that electrified the oppressed masses and kindled in them the hope of getting fair treatment for their dignified existence. It was a preparatory period which brought out the real mettle of the masses to demand their rights. To begin with, Guru Hargobind tested the martial acumen of the people which practice was continued by Guru Gobind Singh till 1702 when he was treacherously forced by the hill Rajas and the Mughal forces to leave Anandpur Sahib. This period of about 100 years galvanized the masses of Punjab into an indomitable force which was preparing itself to remove the centuries old yoke of oppressive rule.

Guru Gobind Singh, during his sojourn in South came across Banda Bahadur at Godawari and found in him the qualities of leadership. He gave him necessary instructions for temporal behaviour and also blessed him with spiritual power to deal with the situations as they were to arise in the course of fulfillment of his mission to Punjab – the testing laboratory set up during 230 years. On his way to Punjab, Banda Singh Bahadur met various types of people who could fit in his mission. He minutely examined the political, social and typographical conditions of his area of operation, before he launched it. Having satisfied himself from all angles, he decided to adopt a strategy which may force Governor of Sirhind to come out of his fort for battle in the open. For that he selected the point then known as Chhaper Jhiri – a place with pond for water and Jhiri, jungle, to serve as camouflage and grazing ground for horses. He first struck the war note at this place on 12th May, 1710, and killed Wazir Khan. In reality this was the beginning of first war of Independence waged by the oppressed people. Now Banda could triumphantly proceed on to Sirhind to decimate the strongest foothold of the Mughal Empire on

amongst the poor and provided security to the village communities against the retributive action of the imperial forces. After him Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Sardar Baghel Singh marched on Delhi forcing the Mughal ruler to surrender. Khalsa flag, the epitome of the hopes of poor people, was hoisted on the Red Fort in 1783. Thereafter, this continued until a mighty kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh extending from Sind, Peshawar, Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir to River Sutlej in the South, was established.

Anglo-Sikh war of 1845 was in defence of Khalsa Sovereign State against the British attempt of its annexation. Khalsa Raj was already an Independent Sovereign State. The annexation of Punjab has never gone down the throat of Sikhs who still cherish the hope to get back their kingdom. Similar struggles are going on in almost every part of India, especially Jammu & Kashmir, Assam, North East States, Telengana and in central India belt starting from Maharashtra, extending to Bihar through Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Chhatisgarh. The situation in the South also is not very different. In view of this prevailing situation of serious discontentment in almost every nook and corner of India, where people sleeping on pavements get killed by well-to-do rash drunk drivers fearing no action, where children are dying for lack of medical facilities, where thousands of villages are without any facility of potable water and education, and where the farming families' bread winners are committing suicides under debt pressure. The idea of celebrating First War of Independence and the debate whether this year is 1857 or 1845 appear a little odd. Certainly, they do not represent the masses that are still fighting for their rights and are anxiously waiting for the days of their independence. Celebrations of 15th August every year as Independence Day is also hollow, since these represent no more than change of white masters into brown ones.

FEMALE FOETICIDE: LAW OF INHERITANCE IS THE TAP ROOT OF THIS SOCIAL MALAISE

DR SARDARA SINGH*

Female foeticide, as rightly observed by the Chief Justice of India, is not as much a legal problem as a social disease. Yet, this social disease does have, if not all its roots, at least its tap root in our laws of inheritance. We have refused to go deep into why this social disease has developed and why it is spreading its tentacles unabated. Earlier, by tradition, girls were not given any formal education and after marriage they were almost totally dependent on the earnings of their husbands and in-laws. This led to the system of dowry, which in the first place was given by the parents to create an economic space for their daughters in the families of their in-laws. Secondly, it was virtual indirect part payment and informal recognition of their share in the property of their parents. Occasional gifts, given by the parents and brothers' families on festival days (*teohars*) were virtually the rent of their deemed share in the properties of their parents. The system did recognize, through social customs, the share of girls in the properties of their parents. This system did not adversely affect family bonds, rather strengthened the bonds between the married girls and their parental families.

The system worked very well, till the dowry demanded by the greedy in-laws of the brides, became excessive, burdensome and beyond the legitimate means of the girls' parents. At times, the system became demonic in its character. The Hindu Succession Act, was purported to be in favour of the girl child through ensuring her share in the parental property. Yet, in its very character the law went against her interest. Social movements like pledges by young boys and girls not to take or give dowry and slogans like '*dulhan hi dahej hai*' go pale in the presence of this Act. However, the damaging provisions of this

Act could still be countered through wills executed by the parents in favor of their sons, and sisters foregoing their right in favor of their brothers by their statements before the courts of law. But, the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act 2005, has sealed that avenue also. Under this enactment, parents cannot make any such will and even the offsprings of married girl can claim their share in the parental property. With this Act and Amendment, dowry has been indirectly made a statutory provision in the form of their share in the parental property. And, the social disease of dowry still stands as such and is showing an uglier face day by day.

The questions that face the society and social reformers as well as policy makers today are (i) When the girls today are equally educated and are capable of earning incomes as good as their husbands, and, in many cases, are even better placed, why should it be socially obligatory for the parents to give dowries to their daughters, (ii) why should the parents of the groom carry an overbearing attitude and consider themselves superior and demanding, (iii) what is that they give to the parents of the bride that they act so proud, while the parents of the girl educate her, bring her up, give dowry, give expensive gifts to the groom's family, incur huge expenditure on marriage, often beyond their means, and send their daughter to the groom's family, (iv) why still the society makes girl's parents then feel several shades lower and why the bride's in-laws come calling? The society has to correct its values, if female foeticide is to be checked and the girl child is to be given its due place in the society.

This Amendment in the Hindu Succession Act has further added fuel to the fire and has weakened the position of the daughter in parental preferences. In case of farming families, this Act and the recent Amendment is bound to play havoc on the farm economy of the country. In rural societies, the girls are not married in the same village. If this law operates in letter and spirit, with the passing of one generation, every land holding will get located in two villages, and with second generation in four villages. This subdivision and widespread fragmentation is going to play havoc with the agricultural economy of the country. Brides will be forced to demand and sell their parental land and they can be tortured to do so. In most cases, the parental families may not have required resources to buy these lands and persons from outside the family will have to buy them.

- that would create social tensions in the rural sector of the economy. Consequently, parental bonds will get snapped, and girls after marriage will be left to fend for themselves. In the matrimonial affairs, the boys' families will look more for the property of the girl, rather than the bride herself. Education, particularly the high-cost professional education of the girl child will be affected adversely and land/property disputes will increase. All these elements and considerations would certainly prompt female foeticides and preference for sons over daughters. More propertied the parents are, lesser will be the preference for a girl child. This is one of the main reasons why the agriculturally richer states like Punjab and Haryana have skewed sex ratio.

The extant inheritance law does not put any onus on the in-laws after the girl is married. Under this law, parents of the girls are in fact triple-taxed instead, by way of expenses on bringing up, education and marriage and above that division of property and the child goes to another family. The recipient groom's family is left with no obligations on this account. Recently, the Supreme Court of India has ruled that daughter-in-law has no right even to share the house of the parents-in-law. All these provisions go against the interest of the girl child and are bound to prompt female foeticides.

Logically, the law should be such that as the girl is married, she becomes equal partner in the property of her in-laws, so that if they ever think of divorce, they have to part with the share of the bride. In this respect, Muslim Law with their system of *mehar*, is much better placed, because with divorce, husband is bound to pay the amount of money agreed upon as *mehar* at the time of marriage.

It is not, therefore, the social system alone, but the complementarity of provisions of our laws, which exacerbate this social disease. People who attend seminars on this issue are not the people who indulge in female foeticide and those who do so, do not attend these seminars. They do not indulge in female foeticide in the knowledge of the people around. The society has to correct its values and amend its laws to create an encouraging and conducive environment that gives respect and place to the girl child, which is her due. Social values and laws of the land operate in an interactive manner and are complementary to one another. We have to review our laws in this perspective. Social values will follow in footsteps.

PROJECT GENDER JUSTICE – HINDU SUCCESSION (AMENDMENT) ACT 2005 –

DR BIRENDRA KAUR*

Guru Nanak is the sole prophet, who, in his benevolence, conferred equality to woman with man. As such, Sikhs should have been the torchbearers to practically implement this doctrine, and demonstrate to the world the vision and far sight of our Gurus, and their love for humanity. But just as we are unable to rid of the caste hierarchy syndrome, which has led to mushrooming of *deras* – a looming threat to our very identity/survival, we have also failed to accept our daughters at par with our sons. Highly skewed gender ratio on account of female foeticide and infanticide is the outcome, projecting us as a hypocrite people. It is a *quomi* shame. Unless we admit it as that, and take drastic steps to correct the wrong by truly following the Sikh tenets, we will never be able to look the Guru in his eyes.

The Government of India, has introduced so many laws to alleviate the dismal status of vulnerable sections of society, such as the aged parents, the women, the children, and so on. For example, the law of Reverse Mortgage allows aged parents to mortgage their house and get monthly payments for a period of up to 15 years, after which they may not receive the payments, but will not be required to pay any rent for living in that house for the rest of their lives. (Whosoever lays claim to that property later would have to pay off the mortgage first.) As such, parents can live a dignified life in their old age without having to be dependent on or at the mercy of their offspring(s). It also caters very meaningfully to parents who have only daughters, in which case, under the present cultural setup, parents are under a complex to go and live with their married daughters.

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For the women too, amazingly enough, various laws have been passed from time to time to, literally, save them from the atrocities that start even before their birth. The Acts on prohibition of Sati and Dowry are well known among these. Female foeticide has been made illegal. Then, in a very recent, significant move, the law for Protection of Women from Domestic Violence has come to recognize even verbal and emotional abuse as acts of violence*. Further still, the Hindu Succession Act gave equal rights to ancestral property to the girl child as far back as 1956. Amazing, because these amendments come from a people who belong to a religion where equality for women is unthinkable. They have come so far, and are moving past those aspects of their ideologies that are detrimental to the development of a healthy society. The Hindu Succession Act is indeed a striking departure from the pre-existing ancient Hindu law as codified by Manu.

Laws are a must to bring about a change in the mindset of a society. The exact benefit that an aggrieved can derive from these laws comes to the fore only with passage of time and/or on the decision of the aggrieved to take legal assistance. But in the absence of an appropriate legislation, there is no hope. Whereas the Prohibition of Sati Act considerably brought down the number of *sati* cases, the Prohibition of Dowry Act could not achieve its aim as anticipated. The girl's parents even abuse the latter sometimes. (But it is interesting to note that this Act mentions the aggrieved as 'the party' and not 'the bride', so that the bridegroom too can go to court for similar reasons.)

Similarly, the Hindu Succession Act 1956 was not firm enough to achieve the desired objective of bringing about gender equality, as daughters, under societal complexes/pressures, would, of their own accord, go to court and forfeit their right to ancestral property. (It needs to be noted here that the in-laws also did not pressurize their daughter-in-laws to lay that claim. Probably, they feared a similar claim from their own daughters. Otherwise, their greed is too well known to necessitate its highlighting here.) Also, the parents had the right to will their property in favour of whichever offspring they desired, leading to the possibility of exclusion of daughters from property rights.

* Verbal and emotional abuse includes insults, ridicule, humiliation, name calling
with regard to not having a child or a male child.

Therefore, the Act has been amended in 2005. This law now has some additions, some deletions, and some substitutions, and is known as the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act 2005.

As per the amendments in this Act, in plain language, apart from the fact that daughters have equal rights to ancestral property as sons, as was already the case, now even their offsprings can claim that right, and parents now cannot will their ancestral property to the contrary.*

To quote a sample of variant views on this issue:

- Kirtee Singh feels that the recent legislative proposals amending the Hindu Succession Act are important steps towards gender equality, but the proposed changes are not comprehensive enough and women will still be subjected to unequal property rights. Among others, one point he makes is that she will be subjected to unequal property rights in agricultural land as Section 4(2) of the Hindu Succession Act allows for special State laws to address the issue of “fragmentation of agricultural holdings”, “fixation of ceiling” and ‘devolution of tenancy rights’ in these holdings. Thus, State laws exist in Delhi, U.P, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab & Haryana, which deny women equal rights of succession in tenancy rights.¹
- Indira Jaisingh, a senior advocate, Supreme Court of India, feels that the amendments are ill thought out, and will do little for women as a whole. She states the example of the so-called reforms of the 1950s, which introduced the right to divorce without simultaneously giving the divorced wife the right to her share of the joint family property; divorce meant an expulsion from the joint family and the loss of the right to be maintained. Thus, the seemingly progressive right to divorce has turned out to be nothing more than the right to a divorce, on pain of losing the right to the use of joint family property.²
- Dr Sardara Singh feels that this Amendment to grant equal share in ancestral property to daughters would weaken the girl, result in strained relations with her brothers and parents, and that farmers would abort their daughters in order to avoid division of their agricultural land holdings, and its location into different villages, as daughters are normally married into villages other than their

own. He sums up that this Amendment would, in fact, lead to her 'unpowerment' instead of her empowerment, as is sought by the Amendment. Further that implementation of this Amendment would shatter the economy of the farm sector, and operational efficiency will be lost completely. His suggestion is that she should automatically become as much a partner in the property and wealth of her in-laws, as her husband, and if they ever think of divorce, the bride should have the right to get the property of the in-laws divided and get her share.³

WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY

Proponents of both the views, i.e., in favour of the Amendment and against it, are aplenty. Although laypersons like me, when it comes to understanding the terminologies used in the text of these Acts, are unable to precisely pinpoint the subtle implications, yet we can try to debate the basic issue as to whether the daughter should be made an equal partner in the property of her parents or not. And, if she is made so on paper, can that be practically achieved without creating chaos-like situation on the ground, and without exposing her to new threats.

First of all, how to determine, to the satisfaction of all, as to which family should she enjoy inheritance rights from? As a female is born into one family and married into another, both the possibilities could exist for her to get her share of rights. Out of the two possibilities, the former relationship, i.e., by birth, is determined by the Almighty and is permanent, lifelong, whereas the latter, through marriage, is an arrangement worked out by mortals, which may last or may not last, or may even change. So, it should not be a difficult choice, as we are to comprehend the *Hukm* of *Waheguru* as concluding and binding.

The fears regarding the economic and practical fallout of the Amendments for the farming class may be genuine. But an issue of the nature of gender equality, so strongly advocated by our Gurus, whose approach was universal, and concern – the entire mankind, cannot be ignored/moulded/bent to suit a section of the populace. The world comprises not of farmers alone, and those too not from the Punjab only. Moreover, other sections of society may have other difficulties in giving practical shape to giving equal property rights to their daughters in their cultures and professions. Thus, we should look for

solutions that would promote the purpose of legislation, and not defeat it.

As for avoiding a chaos-like situation on the ground, we can perhaps learn from the example of Denmark, where, in order to avoid fragmentation of land holdings and sub-division of farms, the government has set up special banks that cater to this issue. The cost of the farm is assessed. Eldest or one of the siblings gets the whole farm, whereas the others get cash compensation for their shares. The bank makes this payment, and the amount is recovered from the farm as a long-term soft loan, in easy instalments.

It would indeed be a good idea, as suggested by Dr Sardara Singh, if she could become an equal partner in her in-law's property, and claim that share if divorced. The suggestion is laudable, but I am afraid it is not practicable. It would now put the daughter-in-law, instead of the daughter in the previous case, in a very vulnerable position, exposing her to new dangers. She will no longer be viewed as a welcome addition to the family of in-laws; she would rather be disposed of as an unwelcome claimant to their property. For, if biological parents would rather murder their own daughter than give her some property, then how do we expect the in-laws to act otherwise? So, the threat to her life remains, this Amendment or that Amendment.

Thus, while the Law proposes that daughters inherit as much share of the parents' assets as the sons, it must ensure its smooth implementation in the interest of the woman herself, so that she may not face fresh threats of altogether new dimensions. The example of Denmark cited above, shows the way. The law of Reverse Mortgage is also serving its purpose well for the aged parents. So, it definitely is not an insurmountable task to find ways that would ensure equality as well as safety of the daughter.

GIVE AND TAKE

The proposal of giving 'away' property to daughters need not startle the parents of the girl. For, the assets going out with the daughter will be compensated for by those coming in with the daughter-in-law, courtesy the same Amendment. This will also obviate the need for the despicable practice of dowry, which, as mentioned earlier, could not be eradicated successfully in spite of the specific Act prohibiting it.

BALANCING THE ACT

The amended Act also mentions that the daughter be subject to

the same liabilities in respect of the said property as that of a son. The dictionary meaning of 'liability' is – legal responsibility, accountability, responsibility, charge. Thus, the law has also given her as much responsibility, accountability as the son in respect of the property. But the liability must also extend to the social sphere, so that she is made as much responsible, accountable towards her parents, as the son. As it is, rights and duties go hand in hand. So, although it is obvious, yet she could be legally made equally responsible as her brother to care for parents in times of need. In the present cultural setup, the parents nurture, educate, give dowry, and send her away as a subservient wife, for whom, looking after her parents is, literally, not an obligation/priority at all. The parents too are given complexes by our society that they are not to consume even a grain from the daughter's house after her marriage. By legally investing her with liabilities, her in-laws will be better informed about these, and the society will come to accept these values, which are, indeed, for the betterment of one and all. Parents can look forward to a secure future for themselves, no matter they beget a son or a daughter. All their investment in their daughter in terms of time, money, and energy will not have gone in vain, and the better their daughter does in life, the better it will be for them. They would now rather invest in her with enthusiasm, and their efforts will fructify, as, given the opportunities, girls are doing as well as the boys in every field. We need to bring home new values to the son-in-law and his family. So, by investing her with a legal obligation to care for her parents, through this law, she would be better placed to do so in the face of the present cultural setup. This step will hold good for both the ageing parents as well as the daughters.

The seriousness of the Government to ameliorate the situation of women is worth appreciating. But, the government must ensure that the assets received by daughter, in whatever form, must be available to her all her life, even if these are converted from one form to the other. Free legal service should be provided at every switch, or rather it should be made mandatory to take legal help for the purpose, so that she, at no stage, is cheated or robbed of her property.

AS SIMPLE AS THAT

Another fallout, though, of this Amendment could be that female

foeticide/infanticide may not end, and the desire for sons may grow, as each son would mean more property in the long run. This possibility cannot be overlooked or simply wished away. The behaviour of each community is affected by its circumstances. For example, labourers go in for many children, as more children means more working hands for them; property is not an issue with them, as they hardly have any. Our sight needs to go as far as possible, if genuine gender equality is to be achieved in every way.

Different countries have different legislatures to cater to the realities on their grounds. France, for example, has increased social and women's services like childcare and parental leave to increase its population. And, China introduced one-child policy, in which having more than one child is made extremely unattractive, to check its overpopulation. India's case is complex. In addition to its overpopulation, India has to balance its skewed gender ratio as well. The females are far fewer in numbers as compared to the males, because the daughter and her parents are the traumatised ones in our culture. Government's serious efforts to ameliorate the condition of women are not all fructifying as expected. Getting a tip from China, India could legislate that if a third child is also a third son, the parents may be heavily taxed. This would not only address the tilt in the gender ratio but also the issue of overpopulation.

Actually, any number of amendments may not do full justice to her as long as we do not view the woman as an individual/person. As per the present cultural values, she is someone who belongs neither to parents, nor in-laws. Parents call her *praya dhan*, and the in-laws think she is on their mercy. Although she is called *gharwali* following marriage but, in fact, she becomes *beghar*. The society further puts pressure on her through dialogues like – *ab teri arthi uss ghar se utbegi*. If we are serious about gender just laws, let us simply replace the words son and daughter with 'offspring', husband and wife with 'spouse', and father and mother with 'parent'.

IGNORANCE IS NOT BLISS

Lastly, one more factor comes to mind when we try to see why sons are preferred to daughters in our society. It is believed that lineage continues through the male child, i.e., ours is a patriarchal society. It must be borne in mind, however, that there are matriarchal societies

too. Thus, such beliefs have no ground, and are merely generated by the environment in which one grows. Biologically speaking, apart from the nine months of pregnancy, the contribution of the mother is more even at the time of fertilization, as compared to that of the father. Ignorance has led to many a myth. For example, men in our society go in for a second marriage, if their wife does not give birth to a son, whereas, it has been long confirmed that the sperm, and not the egg, determines the sex of the child.

It is understandable if societies other than the Sikhs find it difficult to give up the lineage syndrome. But when the Sikhs indulge in practices as are based on such myths, it could not be sadder. Whatever happened to the lineage of Guru Gobind Singh? The Guru sacrificed all his four brilliant sons for our sake, literally throwing the belief of lineage to the winds. He rather ordered us to snap all ties with *kurimaars*. He administered *amrit* to both men as well as women, in that age and time.

If we adopt the nomenclature* gifted by the Guru, whereby all males are 'Singh' and all females are 'Kaur', we will all at once become children of the Guru, and not of different clans. Do we prefer some other lineage to that of the Guru's?

Let the Sikhs heed the Guru's command and practically bring the woman, who, the Guru says, gives birth to kings,** at par with man. For, do we not want to be able to look the Guru in his eyes?!

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* To overcome any situation where more than one person may come to have the same name, the initials of both the parents could be used as, say: Jaikar JB Singh and Roop GI Kaur. As it is, clans are so few that duplication of names is of common occurrence even while using these.

** Guru Granth Sahib, p 473

WHY AND HOW OF SACHA SAUDA PROBLEM

BRIG SURJIT SINGH*

Every right thinking Sikh, who is apolitical must have been highly dismayed to know and see the Sacha Sauda head Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh trying to dress up like Guru Gobind Singh ji and giving 'Jam-e-Ruhani' to some of his followers. Presently, he has a fairly large following in the states, especially Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. A high percentage of his followers are Dalits, both Hindus and Sikhs. The recent elections in Punjab have proved that this sect has effective influence amongst all classes and castes in the Malwa region. Reportedly, when violence erupted in Bathinda, some Congress MLAs supported Sacha Sauda *premis* who managed to chase the out-numbered Policemen.

It will not be out of place to mention here that during the earlier elections, the Dera Head had notably sided with the Akalis but this time for reasons well-known to him, he openly supported the Congress Party resulting in victory for a large number of Congressmen in the Malwa belt, which traditionally has been a pocket borough of the Akalis. The question arises as to how has the Sacha Sauda Dera managed to win over such a large number of Sikhs to become its ardent followers. It is not only this *dera* that has made dent in the Sikh society, various other *deras* whose teachings are at variance with Sikhism have also sprung up throughout Punjab; the ones in Ropar and Jalandhar districts being most prominent. These *deras* have large vote banks and for the politicians to upset them is extremely difficult.

Whereas the *dera* Culture has adversely affected the Sikh society, there are certain Gurdwaras not controlled by the SGPC and various *sampardas* and saints who have rendered valuable service to the Panth.

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- SGPC is highly politicized, and politics appears to dominate Sikh religion. All religious appointments are approved by the politicians, invariably. Decisions pertaining to religious affairs have a political tinge. Politics in our country is now based on castes. The disease has unfortunately been a major reason for lapses and for the weakening of Sikhism.

Now unfortunately the Sikh society has a dearth of good *parcharaks* (preachers). Saints like Sant Attar Singh and Baba Nidhan Singh were able to convert whole of 'Pothohar' from *Sanatan dharma* to Sikhism.

Today the so-called Dalit Sikhs do not take pride in being part of the Sikh brotherhood. In certain cases they have separate Gurdwaras, separate cremation grounds, and the government has made separate *dharamsals* for them, thus separating them from the community. All concessions given to them lack grace. In Punjab, unfortunately, the 'Straight Jacket' casteism appears more rigid amongst the Sikhs than the Hindus. The Arya Samaj had a healthy effect on Hindu society in Punjab during the 20th century. During the early 20th century, a few Dalits decided to become Sikh but on discovering that

castelessness amongst the Sikhs was only on paper, he changed his mind and Sikhs lost a golden opportunity to spread Sikhism to the Dalits in other states of India.

Present-day situation is that because of casteism lack of effective preaching, emphasis on outdated rituals, and domination of politics on religion, quite a few Sikhs have strayed away and are trying to find solace in various *deras*. Some of these *deras* forcefully preach against consumption of alcohol and drugs and various social evils. Their gatherings give the participants a feeling of brotherhood and spiritual satisfaction. Influence of these *deras* is expanding. The *dera* organizations do manage to have linkages down to grassroot levels resulting in dedicated following. The *deras* give personal touch to individuals, which most of the Gurdwaras lack.

SGPC has become monolithic in the governance of the Gurdwaras at all levels. Some sort of authority is exhibited and *seva bhav* and humility of old days is much less visible. We lay so much emphasis on meaningless points like calendars and discussions whether Sikh Gurdwaras in Canada can have *langer* sitting on chairs, etc. A couple of years back, we decided that *sehajdhari* Sikhs should not be allowed to vote for the SGPC elections (which they had been doing earlier). Unfortunately, the leaders concerned do not want to face the fact that significant number of young Sikhs do not want to have *keshas* and the most worrying point is that a high percentage of young Sikh girls do not wish to marry *keshadhari* Sikhs. This serious matter has not so far been taken 'head on' by political, religious or purely religious leadership. It is doubtful whether we do have a purely non-partisan religious leadership, as all the Jathedars are the appointees of political leadership. Quite a few of us would argue that these unpleasant points are not relevant to the present issues. No, all these points are relevant. Our disenchantment is because we are not prepared to solve these unpalatable issues. An average person, when disheartened and frustrated, starts looking for other avenues to get solace.

In educational sphere also, SGPC and various other Sikh Institutions have done nothing specially for the *Dalit* Sikhs to improve their lot. We need to emulate the Christians in this regard. It may be a good idea to go in for the universities to research various aspects of

plan and effectively educate the Dalits, downtrodden and poor children at Primary, Middle and High school levels. Meaningful and attractive religious education should form essential part of education. All this should enable the community to possess a knowledgeable reservoir of good young Sikhs ready to go in for graduation and beyond to become good opinion makers for Sikhism at the grassroot level. Here it would be necessary to point out that for the poor children, economic factor would always be a matter of priority. So all education should be employment oriented. If the Sikhs have the necessary knowledge about their religion and are genuinely proud of belonging to Sikh fraternity, we would not have to worry about the *deras*.

Economically, despite reservations granted to the Dalits through various provisions, a high percentage of Dalits continue to remain socially, educationally and economically backward. Feeling among them is that of helplessness. Quite justifiably Akali Dal fights for the cause of the peasantry, but never have they taken up any step to specifically fight and improve the conditions of the Dalit Sikhs.

It is essential to point out that in Punjab a large number of Mazhbi, Ramdasia Sikhs are in Sikh *swaroop* (*kesbdharis*) because of their recruitment in the Sikh Light Infantry and the Bombay Sappers, an important part of the army.

Above mentioned stray thoughts are put forward in an earnest hope that these may awaken us to overcome our weaknesses within Punjab rather than running abroad for *parchar* and collection of funds, which are already available here in abundance.

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*They alone are true
Who dwell on the True Lord.
They, who worship those who are born to die,
Are the falsest of the false.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 463

ਨਾਨਕ ਸਚੁ ਧਿਆਇਨਿ ਸਚੁ ॥ ਜੇ ਮਰਿ ਜੰਮੇ ਸੁ ਕਰੁ ਨਿਕਰੁ ॥

URGENT CALL FOR THE CARE OF SIKH VANJARAS & RURAL YOUTH

ER MOHINDER SNGH*

Sri Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539), founder of Sikh religion and the first prophet-teacher, propagated one-ness of God and equality of human beings irrespective of religious/caste barriers. Under Divine inspiration, he visited many obscure hamlets of the downtrodden and the holiest Hindu and Muslim religious centers in India, Ceylon, South-Arabia and Iraq for disseminating the revealed spiritual ideals. His Divine mission attracted many followers, who came to be known as "Nanak Panthis".

I am neither a Hindu nor a Muslim...

There are the low castes, lowliest of the low. I, Nanak, have my place with them; what have I to do with high born? God's grace is there where the down-trodden are taken care of.

O Almighty God, kindly shower your blessings on the entire humanity.

VANJARAS' LINKAGE WITH SIKHISM

The nomadic wanderers, Vanjaras tribe of Rajput origin came into the Sikh fold quite early during travels of Guru Nanak Dev. For their livelihood, the Vanjaras had been trading in all types of human consumables along with weaponries for rulers of the time by traveling in big caravans from one corner of the country to another. The Sikligars among the Vanjaras were excellent iron smiths capable of manufacturing all types of weapons. Few of their families from Marwad first came into contact with Guru Hargobind for the first time (1595-1644), when they offered services for weapon manufacturing and recruitment as Sikh soldiers. Later on, with association of Sikligar soldiers, the Guru

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fought and won all four battles against Mughal tyranny and laid the foundations for a Dharam Yudh. The Sikligars converted to Khalsa by taking "Khande di Pahul" of Guru Gobind Singh during Baisakhi of 1699 and played commendable role in arms manufacturing and fighting for the Khalsa cause. In the last stage, they accompanied the Guru to Hazoor Sahib in Nanded. The Vanjaras still consider Sri Hazoor Sahib as their highest place of worship. Some of the prominent Vanjara Sikhs who dedicatedly served the Gurus were Bhai Mansukh, Bhai Makhan Shah, Lakhi Shah, Ude Singh, Bachitar Singh. Some of them who sacrificed their lives were from the family of Bhai Mani Singh. Later on, they joined Khalsa Raj service under reigns of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839). But after annexation of Khalsa Raj by the English in 1849, the hereditary profession of Sikligars received a great setback due to English preference for their own country's machine-made lethal weapons. The Britishers' policy was to cripple Indian industry and its crafts by allowing liberal import of English goods.

The imposition of the "Criminal Tribes Act, 1871", classified the Vanjaras/Sikligars as criminals. The demonization of their sect compelled them to make a mass migration into jungles in most backward tribal belts to save their lives. For living, they now switched over to manufacturing/repair of iron/sheet metal wares, agricultural tools and other miscellaneous household items like scissors/kitchen knives, etc. The Act was repealed by the National Government in 1952, and the Vanjaras were de-notified as a "non-criminal", nomadic tribe. But this period of isolation from mainstream society for generations is the cause of their worst socio-economic backwardness. The Sikligars sect though adopted Sikhism, yet they are facing a lot of discrimination within the community because of their illiteracy and their following of old traditions. Out of estimated 10 crore Vanjaras population in India (majority '*Sehajdharis*'), the Sikligar sect is estimated at 4 crore (*Kesadharis*). But due to ignorance, all Vanjaras are being enumerated as 'Hindu Rajputs' during past censuses due to political considerations. Thus, there is emergency wakeup call for All India Sikh Institutions/leaders to rise above party politics and work jointly for the amelioration of the Vanjaras. Following steps are required to

1. Need for a constitutional amendment for inclusion of all Nanak Panthis/Vanjaras/Sikligars and others to enumerate them as followers of Sikh religion during the next census.
2. To initiate a special campaign from all Five Takhts for imparting proper Sikh religious awareness and *daswand* funds provision for Vanjaras development out of annual budgets of SGPC/DSGMC, etc.
3. To plan a 'Special Economic Zone (SEZ)' around Vanjaras Tandas for providing guidelines for availing assistances under various government-sponsored development schemes and promoting mass-literacy-cum-economic rehabilitation of wandering youth and assisting them for vocational trades' training.
4. Carrying out youth talent hunt to develop new entrepreneurship for placements in industry/service ventures at one place instead of patronizing their out-dated trade of iron smithy by wanderings.
5. Ensuring for their community representations in Sikhs social/religious bodies and gurdwaras.

PUNJAB RURAL YOUTH

The 33 years of my service in Punjab Industries Department, till retirement in 1991, provided me sufficient experience to study the poor educational standards of the Punjab's rural youth. Hardly 20% of rural applicants could be found clearing prescribed matriculation level, besides other eligibility criteria, for selection under various job-oriented government development schemes, whereas balance 80% selection targets used to be easily achieved among urban youth. A largescale school drop-out, neglect due to families, break up of land holdings, drugs indulgence, lack of family counseling, poor rural infrastructure and prevailing poor law and order conditions in Punjab during nineties were the major factors behind poor rural economic development & unemployment. The deteriorating socio-economic ground realities in the rural area are much the same and need to be appraised by all sections of Sikh society rather than wholly depending for their solution from government agencies. It is a known fact that 75% of residents out of 2.42 *crores* population of Punjab living in rural areas are predominantly Sikh followers (2001 census).

The economic distress and large number of unemployed youth in Punjab

debt-ridden farmers, during last 10 years, have been repeatedly highlighted in the press. The government is aware of the horrible problems of marginal farmers. The solution of rural un-employment lies in providing their children a better education up to higher level and subsequently creating suitable job-opportunities for them. Dr G S Kalkat, Chairman of the Punjab State Farmers Commission's recent briefing to the National Development Council was very timely. For sustainable rural development, he suggested that the necessity of guiding farmers to shift from farming to industry or service sector in phases. The state's priority should be for heavy investment in training the rural youth to enable them to get jobs in industries or service sectors. The trades training should be identified according to industry's needs/requirement of the area. Sikh NGOs and institutions are, therefore, advised to guide and assist the youth for getting vocational training in desired trades for enabling them to seek employment in industry or service related jobs.

The rural Sikh youth is going astray due to non-supporting social environment. He has formed an impression of achieving his career's dream by migrating to foreign countries by fair or foul means. All Sikh institutions, Gurdwaras & Deras have to share responsibility to set up special help-cum-counselling clinics, in addition to carrying on routine *Maryada* schedules, to provide assistance to youth for improving their educational standards for their better economic rehabilitation. Sufficient funds out of frequent building renovations, Kirtan Darbars/Chetana marches, etc., can be saved and invested for Sikh youth development schemes. By providing such additional educational services, the youth gone stray is likely to be won over and brought back into the mainstream.

THE TRUST FOR VANJARAS & OTHER WEAKER SECTIONS

The Trust formation was an experimental step to devise a system of reaching out to the most neglected sectors of widespread Vanjaras and economically backward categories of rural youth. With interactions, guidance/cooperation of some of the eminent Sikh thinkers, it was planned to start some linkage cell with broad objectives of providing heritage awareness, literacy promotion, educational/vocational training scholarships, guidance for availing government-aided economic development/rehabilitation assistance schemes for

economically weaker sections. A system was laid down for achieving these objectives under joint association with some of the effectively working state-based voluntary Sikh Societies and Institutions.

A Trust for Welfare of Vanjaras and Other Weaker Sections was thus established in Oct, 1997. (Late) Justice Harbans Singh (retd.) Chief Justice of Punjab & Haryana High Court, was the founder President. After his death, Dr. Kharak Singh, is now the President since 2004. (Late) Jathedar Gurcharan Singh Tohra, President of SGPC, was kind enough to provide a one-time financial grant of Rs.15.00 *lakhs* to the Trust. An Endowment Fund of over Rs.22.00 *lakhs* was thus created within the starting year with individual donations. It is registered with the Registrar of Firms and Societies, Punjab, as well as with the Commissioner of Income Tax U/S- 12 A and 80-G. The annual accounts are regularly audited and the Income Tax Returns are filed through an authorized Chartered Accountant since 1997. The summary of its achievements are:

1. The Vanjaras concentration pockets and areas based location of effective Sikh Societies, for joint collaboration, were first identified after random survey by extensive touring in states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra, Maharashtra, Karnataka, UP, Uttarkhand and Punjab, etc.
2. Objective awareness drive was carried out in Vanjara colonies & other Gurdwara congregations.
3. The need-based schemes selected for field operation at pre-identified places were : elementary education-cum-tailoring/vocational training for girls with supporting equipments & staff, trades vocational training at local centers/polytechnics, higher educational/professional grant on merit-cum-economic considerations, apprenticeship factory training, trades sponsorship to higher learning institutions/polytechnics, free school books/stationery supply, Gurmat/heritage awareness camps, career & job-options counseling camps/seminars, free tools/machinery to the trained youth/artisans for rehabilitation in self-employed ventures and hand operated/auto cycles assistance grant to the handicapped artisans and Gurdham Yatras to Sikh historic Gurdwaras and factories for religious and trade awareness printing

local languages, appeals for programme cooperation to Sikh institutions/Gurdwaras, etc.

4. 100% annual cost of operation of these schemes are met by the Trust for specified period. The associates are to provide working place, hygienic facilities and supervision of the centers' working.
5. The funds are met out of annual interests accrued from Trust Endowment Deposits. The schemes' operational assistance is released in installments @ about Rs 2.00 *lakhs* per annum per centre.
6. The most successful projects effectively carried out or in operation and their locations are:
 - i) Talwandi Sabo-Guru Kashi Campus - Yadavindra College of Engineering, where 10 rural students have so far been sponsored under Punjabi University 'Golden Heart Scholarship Scheme'. Under the scheme a package fee of Rs.2.04 *lakhs* per student is to be donated in advance for 6-years period scholarship from 10th/10+2 class to 4-years engineering course. Rs.12.32 *lakhs* have already been deposited.
 - ii) An educational-cum-vocational training for girls and boys, factory apprenticeship and educational/professional scholarships scheme are in operation since 2003 at Sikligar colony of Preetnagar, Ludhiana, in collaboration with Guru Angad Dev Educational & Welfare Council on matching expenditure sharing basis. The Trust contribution comes to over Rs. 1.00 *lakhs* annually. It is the biggest center where over 280 Vanjaras/weaker sections students are availing of these.
 - iii) Dehra Dun - V. Kurdi Khera: Here Giani Sadhu Singh, a reputed Sikh *raagi*, has established an Inter College, a Gurdwara, a Gurmat Parchar center, drinking water & some other welfare works in his most backward native village all from his own resources under the banner of Guru Nanak Darbar Vidyak Society. According to his version, all *kirtan bhaints* received by him are invested in these welfare works. He himself belongs to a Vanjara class and converted to Sikhism at an early age. He and his team workers have been very successful preachers who brought many Vanjaras of neighboring districts of UP/ Uttarkhand states into Sikh fold

services towards propagation of Sikhism by associating with him for last three years & financing some additional welfare schemes like tailoring training to local girls & Music class in the High school. Musical instruments and tailoring machines have been provided by the Trust along with meeting teachers, salary expenses. A grant of over Rs 60,000.00 is being disbursed annually in the V. Kurdi Khera. The trained girls are proposed to be brought under a Women Society for promoting self-employment.

- iv) Two Gurdham Yatras were arranged during year 2004 & 2005 for the benefit of poor Vanjaras in two batches of 65 each from Madhya Pradesh & Rajasthan. The historical Gurdwaras in Delhi, Haryana and Punjab were visited for providing Sikh heritage awareness. They were also taken to some factories at Chandigarh, Ludhiana, Guru Nanak Dev University at Amritsar & Punjab Agriculture University at Ludhiana for providing them guidance for their likely migration to Punjab for better educational or employment prospects. All travel transport, stay & meals facilities, from their place of residence to all visited stations & back to their respective homes, were provided by the Trust. A third similar Yatra is being arranged for Vanjaras of Uttaranchal by Oct-Nov, 2007.
- v) During last three years over 30 students, including 7 Vanjaras were trained for one year machinist auto-mechanic & Tailoring-cum-embroidery trade courses from Mohali based Guru Nanak VBT Polytechnic. The hostel facilities for the 7 Vanjaras from Nagpur side were also made. The Vanjaras were financially helped for their rehabilitation at their respective places for self-employing ventures. The total project cost including their rehabilitation was over Rs 4.75 lakhs.
- iv) A career guidelines book under the title of *Entrepreneurship Status – Prospects & Promotion*, was published by the author of this article, from his own sources, for free distribution to the youth.
- v) Between the years 1998-2005, similar Vanjara promotional schemes, completed in some other identified stations, had

The assets have now been handed over to the respective collaborators for a follow up action at their level. The stations were at Bhopal-Khandwa-Sighaji (Madhya Pradesh), Hyderabad (Andhra), Kota (Rajasthan – at Bundi, Raipur & Nanta), Nagpur (Maharashtra), Bangalore (Karnataka), Maloya (UT Chandigarh)

APPEALS & CONCLUSIONS

In view of experience gained during last 10 years, performance along with reactions received from the targeted group and area's Sikh Associates, I appeal and conclude:

1. That our religious centres must try to associate the local professionals on a voluntary basis . These experts can best assist the respective managements in successful execution of youth promotion schemes.
2. The Trust work system as briefed above may provide them necessary guidelines for all others.
3. Each Gurdwara Management is requested to spare 10% *Daswand* from their total annual income to create a Welfare Endowment Fund for economic betterment of community's weaker Vanjara sections.
4. Educational Heritage awareness through film shows/CDs and conducted tours can attract youth.
- ✱ 5. Effective awareness & socio-economic help can be provided fruitfully if each Gurdwara adopts at least one nearby village & holds weekly evening Diwan along with a spot counseling to all sections.
6. A Sikh Missionaries cadre should to be promoted on the pattern of Christian missionaries.
7. Free Stay/meals facilities for visiting students for interviews/ exams/competitions and awarding Sikh students for attaining any proficiency in sports/education and All India Service Competitions be encouraged.
- ✱ 8. Organising one week Summer/Winter holidays Gurmat-cum-Career Guidance Camps can provide practical incentive to Sikh youth who have strayed and Vanjaras back to main Sikh stream.
9. Dedicate 3rd centenary 2008 *Gurggaddi* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib as year of the Sikh Youth.

BRIG HARDIT SINGH – SOLDIER-SAINT (AN OBITUARY)

LT GEN KARTAR SINGH*

I have come across a number of Sant Mahatmas in Punjab, who had retired from the Armed Forces. This does indicate that the Spartan life thereon, along with the scenes of death and suffering that they had witnessed during Wars, had their impact on these sensitive individuals. On retirement, they turn to God and tend to lead a hermit's life. Our dearly loved and highly respected member – Brig Hardit Singh Ji, who passed away on 1st April, 2007, was one such Soldier-Saint.

Born on 7th March, 1919, in a village Panshta in Hoshiarpur District of Punjab, Hardit Singh lost his father at a very early age. His mother struggled for a living, and to help her and the family, he joined the Army soon after his matriculation in the year 1941. He was soon commissioned with the Punjab Regiment and took part in the Jammu and Kashmir operations in 1948. For his valour in the capture of Ramgarh, he was awarded 'Mentioned in Dispatches' and also nominated to the prestigious Staff College Course at Wellington in the Nilgiris, which he successfully completed in 1949. He commanded the 16 Madras (Travancore) Battalion and after a staff tenure was chosen to take charge as Commander, Madras Regiment Centre, once again at Wellington. After a very rewarding 4-year stint, he was posted as DIG Assam Rifles in the East. In 1962, he was promoted as a brigade and took charge of Jorhat Sub-Area during the Indo-Chinese War. After a short stint as an Infantry Brigadier Commander in the vital Chhamba area of J & K, he was selected by Gen Kalwant Singh to command and reorganise the fledgling Jammu and Kashmir Militia. For 4 years he went through the rigors of lifting the training and battle

* # 1801 Sector 34-D Chandigarh

efficiency of his command until he succeeded in incorporating this force as a regular wing of the Indian Army. This was an outstanding achievement.

Having served in the substantive rank of Brigadier for 4 years, rules existing compelled him to retire at the early age of 48 years in 1968. Shri Vishnu Sahai ICS, then Governor of J&K, was so impressed by this officer that he arranged to allot a petrol pump as a resettlement benefit to him for his distinguished service in the Army. And so started the retired service of this pious officer and he chose Chandigarh as his permanent abode. He was successful in whatever he did. As a poultry farmer he headed their Association and granted them facilities to sell their products directly in the flourishing Delhi market. Later, when he was allotted a petrol pump in Sector-21 Chandigarh, he left poultry farming and made a successful businessman. He helped in the re-employment of Ex-Servicemen in his business. Within a year his petrol pump was declared by Indian Oil Company as the highest selling pump in Northern India. This honour he carried on his shoulders for four years.

Now came the turning point in his life – the desire to spurn worldly wealth and turn to religion for solace. He became a total vegetarian and handed over the business to his son and family. He enjoyed writing for the IOSS Magazine and also took active part in their deliberations. At home he spent hours reciting the Guru Granth Sahib and absorbing its teachings. He piously applied the Guru's gospel to his daily life, which was devoted to the service of others.

A very interesting fact of his life was his love and fascination for traveling. He was already member of the Bhai Vir Singh Study Circle and he used to visit Dehradun regularly. At this time, he lost vision from one eye due to Kala Motia. Doctors also diagnosed one of his heart valves as weak and needing replacement. He refused to undergo any operation. In fact this soldier who had a sterling record of never having been admitted in a hospital throughout his Army career believed in natural cure more than medication. For 20 years, he carried this so-called weak heart valve without any medical attention. *Bhagti* was his daily diet and also his talisman for good health.

During his later years his sole interest was Sikh History and Sikh Religion. His advice to us at the IOSS was always most valuable and

instructive. In my presentations on the "International Sikh Confederation" he listened most attentively and then wrote detailed comments on the contents and forwarded these to me. This was indeed invaluable in arriving at the final product. His was indeed a mature and sharp mind, honed by the hours of study that he had put in for years.

Hardit Singh Ji found God's name in every object. The ticking of the clock, the whirr of the fan and the rhythmic sound of a running train were translated into music of God. He heard the word 'Waheguru' in all such music. His wife Mrs Lajwant Kaur, his son Col Harjit Singh and his daughters Harmesh and Kanwal were very devoted to him and took good care of him. He started spending many hours in *Bhagti*. He would be up at midnight and at all hours of day to be in communion with God. Age brought in a bit of fragility in health, but he suffered from no major health problem. His regimen was to have long walks, regular light diet and a heavy dose of prayer which he obviously enjoyed. His family was convinced that he had now achieved a rare peace of mind and a direct communion with God. They feel that he had a very definite premonition about his departure from the world. On his 88th birthday in March 2007, he invited all his family members and friends. There was a grand celebration followed by distribution of sweets to all staff members.

Three days before he left the world, he was admitted to command Military Hospital at Chandi Mandir. Because he shunned dependence on others, nurses found him to be a very co-operative patient. For three days he suffered medication and nursing. His loving family, including Harmesh Kaur, his daughter and son-in-law Brig. Gurdip Singh were with him during visiting hours. On Saturday, 1st April, his grandchildren went to visit him and they found their grandfather at peace with the world with a prayer on his lips and without a sign of pain; Hardit Singh Ji had left the world. A Soldier-Saint, who had left a deep imprint on his family and all around him, left this world for greener pastures. May *Waheguru* give us all the strength and will to emulate his pious and generous ways. May his family cherish his memories and follow in his footsteps. The members of IOSS and the ISC salute this outstanding human being.

ON THE ISC FRONT

The ISC continued to make headway during the quarter ending June 2007. Major activities/events are reproduced below:

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM) 5TH MAY, 2007

This AGM was held in the very modern Convention Hall of the Shivalik Public School, Phase-VI, Mohali, by kind courtesy of our honoured member S. Devinder Singh Bedi. He is the Director of the Shivalik Education Society and has distinguished himself in the field of education.

- Dr. Kharak Singh welcomed the members by his words of wisdom. He also urged the SGPC and DSGMC to sponsor a standard translation of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib by a group of Sikh scholars. Once funds are allotted (approximately One *Crore*), the IOSS will undertake this vital project and see it through. We also need to tackle the problems faced with regard to the authority of the Akal Takht Sahib and also the *Dasam Granth*. We feel that SGPC needs to tackle these problems with maturity.

- Lt. Gen. Kartar Singh then reviewed all events and projects that had taken place in the last one year since the last AGM held on 9th April, 2006. These had already been published in various ISC news letters posted to members/posted on our website, and also in the quarterly magazine of the IOSS namely *Abstract of Sikh Studies*. He appealed to the members to subscribe this very interesting magazine edited by Dr. Kharak Singh and his esteemed team of scholars.

- x Lt. Gen. Kartar Singh assured Members that the security and management of the GNEF has been assured by framing foolproof rules which were read out and later passed unanimously by the house. He also informed the good news about the grant of exemption

from Income Tax Under section 12A of the IT Act to the ISC. It was, therefore, decided by the Interim Executive Committee to keep the GNEF as a separate fund within the ISC to be administered by six life members and five additional members to be nominated later by the EC as the GNEF accumulates more funds.

He further announced the plan to launch a television channel in the near future to enable it to communicate the Sikh ethos, Punjabi culture and literature, history and the sacred contents of Guru Granth Sahib.

Gen. Kartar Singh then read out the names of members, who, in the last one year, had rendered exceptional services to society:

- i. Dr. Gurcharan Singh Kalkat, Ex VC, PAU, and Chairman, Punjab Farmers Commission, awarded Padma Bhushan by the President of India for outstanding services.
 - ii. Dr. Gurmit Singh, Ex Secretary General, Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle, Ludhiana, awarded "Shan-e-Punjab International Award 2006-07" for lifetime devoted service to society for 35 years. This was awarded by 'Alag Shabad Yug International Charitable Trust' at Ludhiana on 30th Dec, 2006.
 - iii. Dr. Harnam Singh Shan, noted Punjabi scholar and author, appointed Professor Emeritus of Sikh Studies by the Punjab University, Chandigarh in 2006. He was also awarded 'International Dashmesh Award' by an NRI organisation named as 'Khalsa Darbar' for year 2007 at Los Angeles, USA.
- Sardar Bahadur Singh from Washington State, USA, also addressed the members. He is a devoted member of the Ludhiana Chapter of ISC and has helped in the enrolment of NRI Sikhs. He spoke about the existence of Gurmat Prachar Societies in the USA and their good work. He pledged to work for the ISC.
 - S. Sukhdev Singh, a devoted member of the ISC is dedicatedly working towards the uplift of Sikligars and Vanjaras in Punjab and other provinces of our country. He outlined the miserable plight of these communities and exhorted all members to contribute to their uplift and education. His was indeed an inspiring talk and motivated members to help such needy sections of society and also bring them back into the Sikh religion wherever necessary.
 - Presentations were then made by Dr Sardara Singh Iohi, Dr Chaman

Kamal Singh and Giani Harinder Singh as Heads of our various Advisory Councils. These were brilliantly spelt out and very comprehensive. The gist will appear on our Website.

- S. Gurbachan Singh Makin spoke about the problems faced by Sikhs in Punjab today. S Gurpreet Singh talked about the launch of the Sikh Samaj Sudhar Committee and the oath taken by five young Sikhs to launch a 'Sudhar Lehar' soon to correct the various schisms that have crept into Sikh Society.
- Sardar Mohinder Singh, a devoted member of the ISC and also office bearer of two major Sikh Organisations in Chandigarh recently visited Hazoor Sahib. His experience there was shared with the audience. He strongly feels that our Gurdwaras are not utilising land allotted to them effectively and advised the ISC to work out Blueprints in this regard to modernise the concepts of land use by Gurdwaras all over India.

LOCAL CHAPTERS OF ISC

For better results, it is necessary to organize the Primary members into local chapters. The Constitution provides for this with 10 or more members. A beginning has been made with Ludhiana and Delhi. The former has made a very promising start.

S Karamjit Singh Aujla gave a very impressive narration of the sterling work being done in Ludhiana district by our members. Helping needy students and sponsoring self-employment by students, who have graduated or have no resources to study further, are some of the projects being launched in the countryside. They have also launched a magazine *Seva Lehar*.

The Delhi Chapter is making headway, thanks to the efforts and hard work put in by Sardar H S Phoolka, a leading advocate of the Supreme Court. This chapter is expected to play a leading role in the programmes of the ISC. It has already three coaching centers in rural areas of Punjab. It has eminent personalities, like Sardar Patwant Singh, as members. Efforts are afoot to organize chapters at Amritsar, Jalandhar, Patiala and Sangrur. We are hoping that members at other places will also set up local chapters.

GURU NANAK EDUCATION FUND

The resolution for this Fund was introduced by Dr. Sardara Singh

Johl on 4th Dec, 2007, during the visit of Justice Mota Singh, QC, to our HQ in Chandigarh from UK. Both dignitaries head our Advisory Councils on 'Education' and 'Diaspora and Legal Affairs', respectively. The immediate aims and objectives of the Fund are as under:-

- a To uplift education in the rural areas of Punjab and strengthen its base right at the primary level.
- b To provide coaching facilities to XI and XII class students of rural schools, so that they may successfully compete with their urban counterparts in various competitions. Lack of resources, infrastructure and low caliber of teachers has handicapped rural students all these years and we need to quickly balance this.
- c To allot scholarships to bright selected needy students who have the potential for higher performance in technical studies and research.

Beside these, we have long-term aims which will come into play as the GNEF builds up into a Billion Dollar fund. However, we must thank the members who immediately responded to our call for funds on the day of the launch. We, therefore, thank the following members for their contribution to this noble cause:

Dr. Kharak Singh	Lt. Gen. Kartar Singh
Dr. Amarjit singh (UK)	Dr. S. S. Johal
S. Dilawar Singh Dhutt (USA)	Bibi Dr Birendra Kaur
Justice Ajit Singh Bains	S. Sajjan Singh Bhangoo
Dr. Atamjit Singh	Dr. Gurcharan Singh Kalkat
Bibi Satinder Kaur	Dr. Tejpal Singh Chawla
Justice Bakshish Kaur	S. Baldev Singh Gill (UK)
Dr. Kirpal Singh	Bibi Baljit Kaur
S. Kundan Singh	Col. Amrik Singh
S. Pritam Singh Kohli	S. Gurbachan Singh Makin
S. Mohinder Singh Chana(UK)	Justice S. S. Grewal
S. Sukhdev Singh	S. Ujagar Singh Kumbra
Lt. Col. Parminder Singh	S. Amarpreet Singh Aujla
Col. Pratap Singh Bajwa	

A few more members have also pledged to contribute generous amounts and we hope to be able to finance needy students and also open coaching centers for XI and XII class students in rural areas of Punjab. In fact, we have already set these projects into motion

Considering the role this Fund is expected to play in education and progress of the community, it is hoped that all Sikhs will contribute liberally, and put their *daswands* in this Fund. The Jews did it with remarkable results, why not Sikhs?

COACHING CENTERS

This is the first project under the Guru Nanak Education Fund. In order to compensate for the lack of quality education in rural areas, it is proposed to set up a network of coaching centers to help the rural students prepare for competitive examinations for admission into institutions of higher learning. A beginning has already been made at Mukandpur in district Nawanshahr.

COACHING SCHEME - MUKANDPUR

We have signed an MOU with the management of ASSM College, Mukandpur (Near Banga). Dr Sardara Singh Johl, Chairman, and Principal Atamjit Singh have gone out of their way to help us start this coaching scheme.

Selection of students is based on Class X results plus performance in monthly tests of our scheme. Strength of the class will depend on the response we get. However, we expect at least 30 to 35 bright students in each center under this scheme to be run for two years. Students will be prepared for various competitions for entry into professional Institutes. The remuneration to be paid to selected teachers and co-ordinators along with cost of teaching material will be fully borne by the ISC. Accommodation will be provided by the ASSM College Management.

Classes started on 17 June, 2007. 27 students have been selected to date. 16 students have obtained over 70% marks and the others over 60% marks. Top quality teachers in Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and English have been selected by a Board consisting of Lt. Gen. Kartar Singh Gill, Principal Atamjit Singh and Lt. Col. J. S. Multani. Classes will be run for four periods six days a week. Teachers will be paid handsome remuneration and top class teaching material will be made available to students. Fees in respect of students who obtained 70% and over in class X will be totally paid by ISC. We shall charge nominal fees from other students. Teaching material too is highly

COACHING SCHEME – KHANT MANPUR

This is similar to the above mentioned Mukandpur Scheme. Students will be selected from a group of rural schools in the area under the management of S. Joginder Singh, Chairman of two schools located at Khant Manpur. We have not yet finalised the arrangement for teaching faculty. In case this has to be provided from Chandigarh it will entail considerable expense and will include transportation of Instructors to the site and back. Hence students will have to bear part of the expenses in this scheme as faculty hired from Chandigarh is certainly demanding a higher remuneration. The matter is under negotiation and the Scheme is expected to take off sometime in early July 2007. 50 students have applied out of which about 35 student will be selected and classes started.

Suggestions for more sites for such centers are invited.

DERAS IN PUNJAB

The ISC has watched with serious concern the rapid growth of *deras* in Punjab, particularly the most disturbing activities of the Dera Sacha Sauda. The *deras* flourish in ignorance of the people. It is necessary to launch crash programmes as well as long-term plans to educate the masses in the basics of the Sikh religion and its *rahit maryada*. The ISC wants to play a leading role in this movement in cooperation with the SGPC, DSGMC and other Panthic organizations. The Advisory Council for Religious Affairs under chairmanship of Giani Harinder Singh is preparing plans for this task.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Our individual membership has reached 340. However, we expect that all members work towards enrolling atleast 5 to 10 members each in their neighbourhood. In this regard, we need to laud the efforts of Dr Gurbakhsh Singh USA, S Sukhdev Singh of Ludhiana, Bibi Baljit Kaur, S. Gurpreet Singh and Lt Col Jagtar Singh in propagating the ISC wherever they visit.

We have 20 Organisations / Institutions as members. There is a need to spread our wings so as to bring all Sikh societies and registered gurdwaras into our fold. Members' services in this regard would be most welcome. HO ISC is always ready to support your efforts in this regard.

A PEEP INTO THE FUTURE

I am sure many members would be already trying to gauge the future of our organisation. Many questions come to mind:

- a Will the ISC attract Sikhs from all walks of life as members ?
- b Will the ISC achieve the ambitious aims and objectives written in its Constitution?
- c Are the Organisers a determined group who will never give up their determination to put the ISC on the world map?
- d Will Sikh Institutions like the SGPC accept the ISC as an organisation representing global Sikh community, and work in co-operation with us?
- e What will be the total response of the Sikh Diaspora? Will the majority join and support us?
- f Will we achieve the stature of a global organisation of the Sikhs in the UNO, and other international forums?

We, in the ISC, are optimists and have full faith in the Guru Granth Sahib. Its teachings are our solemn guides. Our sincerity will be tested on many coming occasions. If we continue our efforts, as we are doing now, the Guru will grant us success. With worthy members like you as fellow workers, we shall overcome all obstacles and achieve our aims and objectives by sheer dint of hard work, determination and a rare spirit of brotherly co-operation and compassion. So our answer to all the above questions is 'YES'.

□

*One who amasses wealth
For a brief night's stay in this world
And departs from it by the advent of dawn,
Leaves it full of regrets
As it does not go along with him.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 787

ਗਤਿ ਕਰਣਿ ਪਨੁ ਸੰਚੀਐ ਭਲਕੇ ਚਲਣੁ ਹੋਇ ॥
ਜਾਇ ਕਰਿ ਤੁਸੀਐ ਨਿਜਿ ਯਾਜਾਇ ਨੇਹਿ ॥

REVIEWS

MAHARAJA DALIP SINGH CHEATED OUT

A REVIEW BY DR SARDAR SINGH*

Author : Sardar Avtar Singh Gill

Publisher : Jaswant Printers

Pages : 256

Price : Rs 300/-

Sardar Avtar Singh Gill has written extensively after in-depth search for factual details on the period that spelled doom and, ultimately, demise of the *Khalsa raj*. His interest has been in Maharaja Ranjit Singh (The Lion of Punjab), Kohinoor, Maharani Jindan and Maharaja Duleep Singh. This volume, fourth in the series, is highly informative in its details and touching in its nature. The war scenes, courage and valor of the Khalsa and individual Sikh soldiers and other warriors are described in such details and so vividly that if one removes the inverted commas of the quotes he listed, one cannot help develop the feeling as if the writer was all the time there in different battle-fields and situations and moving along-side the character described and watching every happening of the unfolding history with his own eyes. For instance, the touching taunts and curses of the mother of Diwan Mool Raj not to accept subjugation to the British Generals and the command of Lahore Durbar under the control of the *firangis* and instead protect his and Khalsa's honour and show his valor, which prompted, rather compelled Diwan Mool Raj of Multan to fight against the Hindustani forces, rakes up the slumbering patriotism in the reader. How the two British Generals were killed by Nihang Godar Singh and how their bodies were disposed of is a shocking scene of anger against the attacking forces. Again, the battle of Gujrat where the valor of Khalsa

forces facing the mighty enemy with swords, catching hold of their bayonets with left hand and attacking with swords in right hand, is so touching that one puts down the book and tries to absorb the unparalleled bravery and self esteem of the Sikh warriors. Surrender of the Khalsa Fauj after defeat in Gujrat again depicts not-to-be-subjugated spirit, but a spite on the British commanders personified by the manner in which the arms were laid down by individual warriors, rather thrown on the heap of arms.

The theme of this volume is the cheating out on Maharaja Duleep Singh by the India office and indifference of the authorities in command at the time, when the Maharaja claimed his right to the restoration of his Sovereignty of Punjab, and short of that, demanded the value of the assets and property appropriated by the British rulers in violation of the treaty signed by his Durbar and the British resident guardians. The pecuniary squeeze he underwent and humiliation suffered by him coupled with his anxiety to provide for his family and later his return to the Sikh faith, turned him into a rebel unreconciled. His travel to Aden, denial of permission to enter India and virtual imprisonment in the ship in extreme hot weather and his escape to France, Germany and Russia is a very interesting trail that this book uncovers. The Maharaja's return to Sikh faith, his humiliation and cheating out on his allowances, property and sovereignty, ill treatment at the hands of India Office and his desire and burning zeal to liberate not only Punjab, but the whole of India from the subjugation and clutches of the British Raj made him such a rebel that he started dreaming and scheming of attacking with Russian forces and later with European forces from North West with the hope and misplaced faith that there will be a spontaneous uprising in India through various rulers of small states, defection of Sikhs from British forces and refusal of other Hindustani soldiers employed in the British forces to fight. His plans failed, expectations belied and Russian Czar not giving him audience even, he returned to Paris where he ultimately breathed his last.

The details of his two marriages, five daughters and three sons (three daughters and three sons (besides one infant son died a day after birth) from first wife Maharani Bamba and two daughters from second wife Maharani Ada) and how he was devoted to his wives and

sovereignty of Punjab and independence of India, dispatching his family back to England and himself moving in Europe and Russia makes an interesting and invigorating reading of the mind of a Maharaja coming of age and revolting like a proud sovereign without caring for the consequences in case of his failure. He expressed his preference for dying as a patriot rather than a man in servitude. His letters of defiance to Governor General of India, India Office and to the Queen and Lady Login are a testimony to his patriotism, self-esteem, concern for the country and Punjab and his rediscovered faith in Sikh religion. It is "a redeeming feature that his eldest daughter, Bamba Duleep Singh, could bring the ashes of Maharani Jindan from Panchvati and consign the same by the *samadh* of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Maharaja Duleep Singh did not, however, had that luck. He was consigned to the grave beside the grave of his wife in England. It is again an irony of fate that none of the sons and daughters of Maharaja Duleep Singh had any child and the dynasty of Maharaja Ranjit Singh came to an end with Bamba Sutherland, the eldest daughter of Maharaja Duleep Singh, breathing her last, yet redeeming, not before she could see the Union Jack coming down and removed on 15th August, 1947 from the sovereign state of her grandfather, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, as well as from the country India before her eyes.

I congratulate Sardar Gill, the writer of this volume, for his highly successful endeavor in catching the true essence of Khalsa Raj, fighting back of Khalsa, and dynasty of Maharaja Ranjit Singh acquitting themselves well in their feelings and actions for restoring the sovereignty of Punjab and India as a whole. The writer has proved himself as researcher par excellence and investigator with deep commitment. I recommend this book for serious readers and also for those who are interested in knowing the cross currents underlying the devastating developments that led to fall of the Khalsa Raj and subsequent happenings relating to the Maharaja Ranjit Singh's successors, particularly Maharaja Duleep Singh.

TEACHING SIKH HERITAGE TO THE YOUTH - LESSONS LEARNT -

A REVIEW BY COL AMRIK SINGH*

Author : Dr Gurbakhsh Singh

Publisher: Singh Brothers, Amritsar

Price : Rs 60; Pages : 128

Dr Gurbakhsh Singh, a veteran scientist, has been doing a sterling job in the field of enlightening people, both Sikhs and non-Sikhs, about the core philosophy of Sikhism and teachings of our Gurus as brought out in our Holy Book, and the Guru Eternal, Sri Guru Granth Sahib. In addition to bringing out a number of books on the subject of practice of Sikhism in our day-to-day life, he has been attending and speaking at seminars and inter-faith gatherings, both in India and the western world. His main focus and target have been the youth.

His book *Teaching Sikh Heritage to the Youth - Lessons Learnt* in two volumes is unique in the sense that practice of Sikhism has been written from practical experience in his interaction with the youth on various occasions and during the *Gurmat Chetna Lehr Camps*. Most of the articles are related to the discussions with youth. The incidents from other faiths have also been appropriately included to highlight particular points raised during the discussions. The articles aptly bring out the various doubts the youth faces in the practice of Sikhism, especially in answering searching questions from youth of other faiths. There is immense misunderstanding and misinformation about Sikhism and its practice in day-to-day life, both among educated Sikhs and people of other faiths. These articles clarify most of these doubts. Many of my own doubts have been cleared by going through this book.



This book needs to be studied and understood by most of us and the youth in particular. The book needs to be popularized and I recommend that Sikh institutions like the SGPC and DSGMC undertake its free distribution. Sikh parents need to inculcate these lessons among their children beginning from their tender age. For the benefit of wider audiences, Punjabi, Hindu and Urdu versions of the book should also be brought out, so that those having difficulty in understanding the English language, are not deprived of the useful information the book carries.

It is an appropriate publication for study, both by elderly people and the youth, and is a food for thought for further delving into the practical teachings and practice of Sikh religion, the youngest among world faiths.

It was indeed interesting to note that the typing was a voluntary undertaking by young students, who had benefited from the interaction with Dr Gurbakhsh Singh as his students in school and Gurmat Parchar Camps. While going through this book and pondering over the rich heritage of Sikhs and teachings of our Gurus for leading a life of *Chardhi Kala* and belief in only one God Almighty, I am reminded of an episode narrated to me by one of my village elders when I was a student in our village Primary School. He narrated the experience of someone known to him, who had visited Germany sometime after the Second World War. In his hotel bedroom, he noticed someone peeing through his room very early in the morning. After a few days, he thought of finding the intruder. He was alert that morning and saw an employee of the hotel peeping by slightly opening the door. On questioning the employee, he conveyed that, he had heard that Sikhs after an early morning bath remember God by reciting the hymns from their Holy Book and that he was curious to see this for himself. The Sikh gentleman felt ashamed of his un-Sikh conduct, especially when people of other faiths had such high regard for Sikhs and teachings of their Gurus. As Sikhs, let us come up to such expectations in order to sustain high regard for Sikhs among people of other faiths.

THE REAL RANJIT SINGH

A REVIEW BY ER GURCHARAN SINGH*

Author : Fakir Syed Wabeeduddin

Publisher: Punjabi University, Patiala

2nd Edition 2001,

Price Rs 300/- ; pp 166

There is no book like this book, which portrays Maharaja Ranjit Singh as a human being, a person of flesh and blood, and not merely a man of history.

The author's ancestors, the Faqir brothers were the men nearest to Ranjit Singh in public and private life. They have left valuable accounts of his day-to-day life in court as well as behind the scenes. The book is based upon these facts.

There is a legend of a mysterious apparition appearing before Ranjit Singh addressing him not to sit on the Mughal throne, and to rule all subjects impartially – which he did throughout his life. Ranjit Singh, though a devout Sikh, had profound reverence for all that was holy and spiritual. He gave liberal grants and donations to shrines of all faiths, and paid tributes to holy men of all religions. There is a story of a calligrapher carrying with him a beautiful manuscript of the Holy *Quran*, and finding no buyer for it in Punjab, on way to Hyderabad. Ranjit Singh immediately ordered Faqir Azizuddin to pay him Rs 10 thousand, asked by him, from state treasury, so that the talent does not go un-rewarded. He literally saw everyone with one eye and his subjects, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, equally reciprocated his warm interest in their faiths by remembering him in their prayers on important occasions such as new campaigns, victories, or when he fell ill, and

* # 142, Phase 4, Mohali

finally during his last illness.

When Ranjit Singh assumed the throne of the Punjab, there was no throne in literal sense. He sat on a chair or on a carpet as he did when he was a chieftain. He said, "I am a peasant and a soldier, and do not care for external pomp. My sword is enough to win for me all the distinction, I need." This ascetic indifference to personal adornment was all the more remarkable for his keen sense of delight in beauty, colour and gaiety. The men around him, his councillors and courtiers and military officers were among the best looking and most magnificently dressed men of their times.

He had a passion for beautiful horses and beautifully decorated elephants. He adored jewellery, and loved to see it on people around him. There was utter lack of vanity about his power. He gracefully accepted disadvantage of his looks with pitted face, one blind eye, diminutive figure which nature had inflicted on him. He never tried to improve these. His mind was intent on bigger things. His lack of looks was more than made up by his simplicity, an intelligence of higher order, a disarming frankness of speech, punctuated by long intervals of tactful silence, an easy informality which yet commanded respectful and correct behaviour in his presence. There was an aura of natural majesty which threw his fine looking courtiers into shade, and made them proud of serving him.

In early days, Ranjit Singh liked to be addressed as "Singh Sahib". Older Sikh Chiefs called him "Brother". Later, "Maharaja" became the usual form of address. He was often at pains to impress that the true 'king' was the 'Guru', he was only the Guru's humble servant. The government was always 'Sarkar-e-Khalsa' and derived all sovereign powers from 'Panth Khalsa', the mystic entity in which all powers were enshrined by the Guru.

He was so conscious of his subjects' rights that two orders issued by him show this: one decrees that no person in the city should practise high handedness and oppression on the people. The second is in regard to security of the town. Even if a prince or a minister commit any inappropriate act the incharge commander should bring it to the notice of His Highness. Daily reports should be obtained from the Kotwal and petitions intended for him be forwarded to him promptly. The orders were models of royal draftsmanship by any standards.

or modern.

His reign was humane and no capital punishment was awarded even to the worst offenders.

I have left out some chapters narrating Ranjit Singh's rise of power, his consolidation of position in Punjab, relationships with the English, the Afghans, his conquests of Multan, Kashmir, Peshawar. These are though important part of history and reflect his genius as a leader, a strategist and potential king, I have mainly confined to his life as an individual and as a family man.

Ranjit Singh's father, Maha Singh rose to head the Sukerchakya Misl and by marrying Raj Kaur, daughter of Chief of Jind, Gajpat Singh, made a powerful alliance. He was opposed to Kanahiyas. In a battle with them, son of the Kanahiyas chief got killed. This brought about a truce and the Chief's grand-daughter Mehtab Kaur was married to young Ranjit Singh. Later Ranjit Singh's mother-in-law Sada Kaur became the Kanahiya Chief. After Maha Singh, Ranjit Singh became head of Sukerchakya Misl. Sada Kaur, in the beginning, saw him an upcoming daring leader and supported him to drive out Pathans, later on the Bhangis, from Amritsar and Lahore. But her self-interest was stronger. She wanted him to rise to advance her own power. She did not get on well with Ranjit Singh's mother and interfered in their internal matters. As a result, Ranjit Singh's relations with his wife Mehtab Kaur were estranged. Sada Kaur took her daughter Mehtab Kaur away with her, where two princes Sher Singh and Tara Singh were born, who thus lived away from their father. This marred the relations further and frittered away what could have been a stronger alliance.

There is a story of Fateh Singh Ahluwalia who always stood by Ranjit Singh and became his brother by exchanging turbans. Some body created misunderstanding between them causing him to flee. On knowing the background, fortunately he came back and old affections were restored. There are many such examples of Ranjit Singh's magnanimous nature.

There was a peculiar relationship between Ranjit Singh and Phula Singh and his band of Akalis. Their cherished dream was to see a Khalsa kingdom established, though they were not well organized and equipped for that. They saw in Ranjit Singh the stuff they were looking

for, and they helped him to win many battles where fanatical energy was required. But they were difficult to deal with. Pious and humble and serving the gurdwaras on one hand, they thought they were entitled to extract from the community anything they needed for their up-keep. It was an article of faith with them to defy and prey on the powerful and the rich, while serving the poor and the weak, with whom they were popular. Ranjit Singh had a good deal of patience and tolerance to have them in royal service, though, on occasions, they embarrassed him with their irritant pranks.

Prince Kharak Singh was Ranjit Singh's eldest son from his second and favourite wife Raj Kaur. He was utterly lacking in ambition and worldly sense. Though he was trained as heir-apparent and was sent on some military expeditions, his real interest lay in reading the Granth and sitting in the company of holy men. He gave his father great anxiety as a future successor. Ranjit Singh's death-bed decision to entrust him his kingdom with Dhian Singh as the Prime Minister did not work. Within months he was imprisoned and poisoned to death. Faqir Azizuddin spoke of this with profound sorrow.

Ranjit Singh's passionate love for horses can be judged from the fact that he had more than 1200 horses in his stable, 1000 reserved for him personally. Riding was his favourite exercise. Whenever he was burdened with private or state matters, he would abruptly call for a horse, saddled, bridled and go for a long ride. The vanity he lacked about his own appearance was made up in appearance of his horses. They were be decked in most expensive and gorgeous trappings. Famous were Gauharbar, Sufaid Pari, Laili – all of Persian breed. There is a fairy tale-like story about Laili for which many expeditions were made and it cost him sixty *laks* of rupees and 1200 soldiers! He used to take pride in this possession and exhibit to his foreign visitors.

Another marvel was his bungalow on wheels – decorated, furnished and pulled by eight elephants. This was for royal children and their playmates for a journey on festive occasions. He was fond of children, specially the good looking and intelligent ones. His most favourite was Raja Dhian Singh's son Hira Singh, handsome with ready wit and fine bearing. Compared to him, his own sons Kharak Singh and Sher Singh were mediocre. Kharak Singh was utterly dull, Sher Singh, though manly in appearance, lacked courtly wit or wisdom.

Maharaja's pets were pigeons and domestic fowls. Sometimes, visitors were surprised to be ushered to his presence where he was surrounded by these pets as he was feeding them. He was humane, even during hunting. It was more for his own exercise and his greyhounds, and not for slaughtering. There is an incident of a young tiger cub being caught by his *shikaris*. When Ranjit Singh came to know that its mother was stalking in the dark and moaning all night, he ordered it to be released to join the tigress.

Ranjit Singh's harem consisted of 46 women, nine Sikh wives, nine widows adopted as per custom, seven courtesans and remaining concubines. He was susceptible to feminine charms as a man, but not as a ruler. There were no public scandals involving him or his officials. His first wife Mehtab Kaur was haughty and did not like him. On the other hand, he received affection and warmth from the second wife Raj Kaur, later mother of Prince Kharak Singh. In beauty, two daughters of Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra Guddan and Bamso, and famous courtesan Moran were well known. Moran was Ranjit Singh's most favourite, and used to appear unveiled in public with him.

Between public life and private life, he had his own diversion of wine, song and dance once a while. But there was little of debauchery. These were displays of art and sometimes banter exchanged, never orgies or dissipation. He was always on guard against lapses from royal standards; on the other hand, the dancing girls had their own vigorous code of etiquette.

In March 1837, Maharaja's grandson Nau Nihal Singh was married. Maharaja told his Ministers and Sardars that he wanted the wedding to be remembered and talked about. So it was a most lavish affair, attended also by the British Commander-in-Chief Sir Henry Fane. The festivities, various ceremonies, the costly gifts exchanged, entertainment and honour given to the visiting dignitaries are best read in the original. It was most amazing and glamorous. In regard to expenses, as if the floodgates of the royal treasury were opened.

Death came to the Lion of the Punjab on 27th June, 1839, after frequent attacks of fever and dysentery. Earlier he had a few strokes of paralysis from which he recovered every time, but weakend. Faqir Azizuddin was always in attendance and did more than a son. Maharaja

as successor aided by Raja Dhian Singh as Prime Minister. Many *Sankalps* – ceremonial offerings of gifts including elephants, horses, costly jewellery, clothing, gold vessels, coins were made to Brahmins. A gold and silver bier costing Rs 10 *laks* was prepared for the last journey. There was weeping and crying all round and recitation of Gita and Guru Granth Sahib continued. Four *ranis* led by Rani Katochan with seven maidservants readied themselves to sit on the pyre with the Maharaja's body. Dhian Singh showed as if he also wanted to join them but he was prevailed upon by entreaties from various quarters. On the pyre, Rani Katochan made Raja Dhian Singh and Prince Kharak Singh promise to stand by each other to carry on faithfully the affairs of the kingdom. Lastly, Prince Kharak Singh lit the fire. Thus ended the reign of the Lion of the Punjab.

Thus ends the story told by the author. But perhaps some thing more ought to have been said. How did Ranjit Singh view his great generals like Hari Singh Nalwa and Dewan Mohkam Chand; what did he think of Cis-Sutlej rajas who forsooke him and took shelter under the British; what kind of services of Dhian Singh Dogra and his brother impressed him that they rose so high so soon; what made him agree to place persons like Jem Khushal Singh and others of his ilk to occupy the most sensitive positions of security of his palace which created problems for his successors; near the end of life how is that un-Sikh rituals like *Sankalps* to Brahmins and after his death burning of his *ranis* became so unavoidable and compulsive; etc. These the author has tactfully avoided for reasons known to him.

The book is clearly typed and well bound. A foreword by Lord Hailey and a preface and introduction by the author give the background of this work. There are many coloured photos of the Maharaja, his *ranis*, Princes, Ministers, Generals and others which add colour to the text. Most interesting work on the personal life of the Maharaja, indeed, for all readers including scholars.

NEWS & VIEWS

ANNUAL SEMINAR

— CHANGING DEMOGRAPHY OF PUNJAB —

The Annual Seminar of the Institute of Sikh Studies is scheduled for 10th and 11th November, 2007, at Chandigarh. Factors like the following exercise significant influence on population pattern of the state, and have far reaching social, economic and political implications:-

- a Emigration of youth, particularly Sikhs seeking greener pastures abroad.
- b Influx of labour (skilled as well as unskilled) from other states.
- c Adverse male to female ratio.
- d Industrial policy of the state as well as central government.

Leading authorities on the subject are being requested to present paper, highlighting the recent trend, future projections as well as lessons for planners, leaders of political parties, and preparation for the 2011 census. All are invited to attend the seminar. There is no admission fee.

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### STANDARD TRANSLATION OF GURU GRANTH SAHIB

On the persistent demand from the Institute of Sikh Studies to prepare a standard English translation of Guru Granth Sahib, SGPC has finally constituted a sub-committee of the following scholars vide its Order No 110 dated 25-5-2007:

1. Singh Sahib Giani Joginder Singh Ji Vedanti, Jathedar Sri Akal Takht, Sri Amritsar
2. Singh Sahib Giani Gurbachan Singh, Head Granthi, Sri Darbar Sahib, Sri Amritsar

3. Prof Jodh Singh, Punjabi University, Patiala
4. Giani Harbans Singh, Patiala
5. Dr Balwant Singh, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar
6. Giani Bharpur Singh, Ardasia, Sachkhand Sri Harmandir Sahib, Sri Amritsar
7. Dr Kharak Singh, Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh
8. Dr Rattan Singh Jaggi, Punjabi University, Patiala
9. Secretary, Dharam Parchar Committee, SGPC.

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A UNIQUE WORKSHOP-CUM-SEMINAR

A highly successful residential workshop-cum-seminar was organised by the Satnam Sarb Kalyan Trust (Regd.), for three days at Sri Anandpur Sahib from April 27-29, 2007, hosted by the Takht Kesgarh Sahib. The purpose of this commendable activity was to train the Divinity teachers engaged in spreading *Gurmat* to the school children for their moral rejuvenation following the path of righteousness.

Satnam Sarb Kalyan Trust, a registered society, is primarily an NRI-aided forum meant to extend literacy and moral regeneration among the youth, which indirectly fights the growing evils of drugs and despondency among the impressionable youth in the disintegrating educational structure in the state of Punjab. The Trust has adopted more than two hundred and twenty schools in the rural and urban Punjab accounting for approximately 80,000 school-going children by employing about 175 teachers imparting ethical and value based instruction to upgrade the cultural standard of the youth, their moral and principled growth into responsible citizens, and to open to them vistas of professional and educational excellence. It is estimated that by the end of the current financial year, the number of students will rise to more than one *lakh*.

The Satnam Sarb Kalyan Trust has plans to provide career coaching guidance and financial assistance to the children of 9th to 12th classes from the current academic year onwards, preparing them for higher academic courses and related careers. An organisation based in USA will be visiting India probably in August, 2007, to provide financial help to poor and needy students, sponsored by the Trust.

It is highly commendable that the Satnam Sarb Kalyan Trust has

motivated thousands of children to return to the Sikh fold. Approximately 1400 students under the directions of the Divinity teachers take the *amrit pabul* each year. The record for the adoption of *Keshas* to return to *Sabat Surat* by the children for the past three years is as follows:

| | |
|--------|------|
| 2003-4 | 3714 |
| 2004-5 | 3903 |
| 2005-6 | 3488 |

The Trust having its office at #1078/2, Sector 39, Chandigarh, (Ph: 0172 2691922), organises *Gurmat* competitions every year to generate interest among the youth. Career guidance camps are held for classes X to XII to make children aware of career opportunities available to them. Free medical camps and turban tying competitions are the other activities. Emphasis is placed on awareness of drug abuse and environmental control. Painting competitions and *gurmat sangeet* events are organised. A dozen children along with a tutor are going to the USA and Canada to present *sabd kirtan* at the gurdwaras there during the month of June, 2007. (Courtesy : Gajindar Singh, #2983, Sector 61, Mohali)

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SIKH AMERICAN STUDENT IN ALABAMA ALLOWED TO RETURN TO SCHOOL WITH BOTH TURBAN AND HAIR INTACT

Washington D.C. – May 15, 2007: Last week, the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF), the oldest Sikh American civil rights and advocacy organization in the country, successfully represented a 15 year old Alabama high school student who was allowed to return to school after being kicked out of Good Hope High School for keeping his hair uncut and wearing his *patka* – a religiously mandated Sikh head cover.

Earlier this Spring, while researching religion on the internet, Mr Tommy DeForest came across the Sikh faith, and immediately felt an affinity for the faith. After reading more about the religion, Mr DeForest started to keep his hair uncut and wear a make-shift head covering. Upon trying to attend classes at Good Hope High School, Mr DeForest was turned away at the campus gates and told that he would not be allowed on campus with his long hair. Mr DeForest was also subjected

to repeated disciplinary punishment and finally suspended for his resolve to freely practice his faith.

A meeting was subsequently arranged between the DeForest Family and the school administration. At this meeting, Principal Anita Kilpatrick and the Superintendent for Education of Cullman County Hank Allen, adamantly supported their decision to deny Mr DeForest from practicing his faith freely while attending public school. Additionally at this meeting, the suspension was extended indefinitely – effectively denying Mr. DeForest the right to public education simply due to his religious affiliation and forcing him to choose between his faith and an education.

Mr DeForest contacted SALDEF with his concerns surrounding his ability to freely practice his faith, as guaranteed by the Freedom of Religious Expression principle within the United States Constitution. Mr. DeForest and his family were put in contact with local Alabama Sikh American community activist Rajinder Singh Mehta who provided Tommy with a patka and *kara* (steel bracelet), both mandated Sikh articles of faith.

“For a public school in our Nation to essentially tell a child to check his faith at the door and to force the student to choose between receiving an education and practicing their faith is a tragic violation of the principles that our country was founded on,” stated SALDEF Managing Director Kavneet Singh. “This type of action is completely inexcusable and counter to the rich diversity found in the South and across the country.”

SALDEF is pleased that Tommy DeForest has been allowed back in school while maintaining the articles of the Sikh faith. We thank the school and district administration for working with SALDEF to resolve this situation satisfactorily. SALDEF is hopeful that faculty and administration of schools across the United States will take steps to understand and inform themselves of the diversity of religious practices among their student populations, so instances like this will not happen in the future. (Courtesy : Navjeet Singh c/o SALDEF (USA) <navjeetW@saldef.org>)

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**IT WON'T LEAD TO IDOL WORSHIP — SARDAR SIMRANJIT SINGH**

I have read with deep interest your report, "SGPC drops move to buy Duleep Singh's bust" (*Tribune Impact*, April 15, 2007), in which your reporter says that due to the influence of *The Tribune*, the SGPC will not bid at the auction where Maharaja Duleep Singh's bust is up for sale. Your paper has said that the SGPC has agreed that if the bust is purchased it would amount to idol worship which is prohibited in the Sikh religion.

I offer to disagree with this illiterate, misleading and unhistoric approach to the Sikh religion. In the Sikh religion, we are prohibited from making idols of our Gurus and the holy Guru Granth Sahib, and also the worshipping of their pictures and photographs.

Maharaja Duleep Singh is a historic figure in Sikh history who is the legal link to the principle of Sikh sovereignty, because in 1849 after the annexation of Punjab by the British the Anglo-Sikh Treaty says that the sovereignty of the Sikhs will be restored after the then minor Maharaja Duleep Singh comes of age. The British cheated the Sikhs of their sovereignty as when Maharaja Duleep Singh became a major, they in trespass of this treaty obligation did not restore our sovereignty. Therefore, constitutionally and legally as per this Anglo-Sikh Treaty, the Sikh sovereignty lay under suspension and was not abrogated ever, even till 1947 when the British handed over power to Pakistan and India.

In 1947, India was partitioned on communal grounds as the Muslims argued that since the British displaced Muslim rule, they were legally and morally bound to hand over that power to them. Similarly, the British did not follow the legal principle by which the Sikhs had a better and stronger claim to sovereign power. As per the 1849 Anglo-Sikh Treaty, when the British left India in 1947 they were legally and morally bound to restore the sovereignty of the Sikhs which they never abrogated. But in the case of the Muslims, in 1857 it was annulled and abrogated.

After 1947, the Sikh leadership not being satisfied with the promises which the Hindu-led Congress party made to them prior to 1947, its two representatives in the Constituent Assembly, Hukum Singh and Bhupinder Singh Mann (my uncle), did not sign the Indian

Constitution of 1950. Therefore, the Sikhs have not lost their constitutional and legal claim to political sovereignty after their empire was suspended in 1849. As such, Maharaja Duleep Singh is a very important figure in Sikh history who is a political and not a divine personality.

Therefore, it is only the SGPC authorities who have a lack of education and religious background who fell for *The Tribune* story and agreed to in not bidding for this precious artefact. Purchasing Maharaja Duleep Singh's bust will, in no way, lead to idol worship. If so, then by the same logic all the statues of Master Tara Singh, Maharaja Ranjeet Singh and other Sikh personalities are also examples of idol worship and should be destroyed! I depreciate this ignorant fanaticism creeping into Sikhism just like the Taliban destroyed all Buddhist history in the caves of Afghanistan when it came to power there in the 1990's.

What is idol worship in Sikhism? Idol worship is like what the SGPC has done by placing a model of Darbar Sahib at the International Rajasansi Airport at Amritsar and the printing and display of our Gurus' pictures and photographs. (*Courtesy : The Tribune, April 22, 2007*)

### PANTHIC CONVENTION, DSGMC

A Report on the Panthic Convention sponsored by the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC), held at Master Tara Singh Auditorium of Guru Tegh Bahadur Khalsa College, Delhi University on May 26, 2007.

The undersigned along with Sardar Gurpreet Singh attended the seminar on behalf of the ISC and IOSS. It was indeed a memorable convention to participate. It seemed as though the entire Sikh Panth had converged there. Jathedar Akal Takht, along with Jathedars of Takht Damdama Sahib, Kesgarh Sahib and Patna Sahib, Chiefs of the Damdami Taksal, the Sant Samaj, the Chief Khalsa Diwan, the Singh Sabhas' and Sikh Youth Federations participated in the Seminar. A large number of intellectuals from India and abroad were also present.

This convention happened to coincide with the Dera Sacha Sauda controversy. This proved to be a blessing in disguise as the occasion provided an opportunity to the Sikhs for self-introspection. Besides addressing Panthic concerns, the speakers sought to analyse the reasons as to why the Dalit Sikhs were being influenced by the Dera.

and were moving away from the Sikh Panth. Failures and lapses of the leadership and the community were discussed and remedial measures were suggested.

Jathedar Trilochan Singh suggested constituting a 20 member Parchar Committee in all the villages of Punjab, including five Ramdasia and Mazbi Sikhs.

Jathedars of Damdama Sahib and Patna Sahib noted that clean shaven (*mona*) Sikhs, contrary to the general impression, had not deviated from the Sikhs ethos, as many of them were found leading the fight against the Dera Sacha Sauda. They stressed the need to bring them back into the Sikh form.

Sardar Manjit Singh Calcutta suggested that a Standard English translation of Guru Granth Sahib should be made. He further suggested the International Sikh Confederation and Institute of Sikh Studies offered their services for carrying out this project.

Jathedar Panjoli discussed the problems facing rural Punjab with special reference to poverty, ill health and poor state of education. Some speakers suggested that the Christian role model could be adopted to address the issues of poverty and health. The problems of rural indebtedness and suicides by farmers were also highlighted by some of the speakers.

Speaker after speaker dwelt on the dire need of restructuring the Sikh institutions so that they could reach out to the underprivileged and the poorer sections of the Sikh society.

The proceedings of the seminar went off very smoothly. The arrangements were flawless. DSGMC deserves our heartiest congratulations.

It was heartening to see that the Sikh Panth had stopped reminiscing about the past and was giving futuristic directions. It was like a light at the end of the tunnel. One could see a glimpse of the glory of the institution of *Gurmatta* in operation.

The Convention concluded with the following resolutions, which were unanimously passed :

#### THE PREAMBLE

The Sikhs from all over the world came to the conclusion that there was political interference in the working of their religious bodies.



Irreligious elements have infuriated and are interfering in the managing committees of Khalsa Schools and Colleges. There is irresponsibility and laxity of teaching religion by the faculty. Panthic religious leaders felt very deeply disturbed about this, but were completely helpless.

The Rashtrya Sewak Sangh and other allied bodies were challenging the distinct independent identity of the Sikh people. A sense of helplessness and frustration have begun to creep into the Sikh Youth, who are drifting. This largely representative Panthic gathering ask the entire Sikh leadership to restructure and revamp their policies, programs, and set their goals afresh, so that they could render the services they were meant to deliver.

For giving this strategy shape, the convention announces the following resolutions:

**Resolutions passed on 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2007 at  
Guru Tegh Bahadur Khalsa College, Delhi University.**

1. All Gurdwaras should be converted into centers of Human and social welfare centred in spirituality and with Sikh value systems. Proper interpretation and propagation of scriptures should be given top priority. Sikh Panthic organizations and Gurdwaras should make use both of print and electronic media to preach Sikh value systems and history, using modern terminology.
2. Sikh education institutions should ensure a very high standard of teaching, combining both the old and new systems. So that Sikh youth are well versed with the modern world and also conversant with their historical heritage.
3. The ill effects of hollow showing and unnecessary expenditure on social and religious functions has brought a great decline amongst the Sikhs. The use of drugs and intoxicants has proved a curse too. Female foeticide is another black mark. We should make an effort to address all these problems.
4. Forgetting the great sacrifices made by Sikhs for this country and humanity at large – the Indian media has adopted a very negative role viz-a-viz the Sikhs. We invite the Sikh Panth to develop their own information technology and electronic media and Delhi

direction.

5. The Panthic organizations that have come into existence after a great historic struggle are showing a downward slide and lacking the will to check the situation. We invite the Sikh representatives and institutions for working to restructure and reform this trend. They should deliberate over these problems seriously and make efforts to find suitable solutions. We appeal to Sikhs world over to evolve such a leadership which can both inspire them and act as their ideologues. So that they can face the challenges in the true Khalsa spirit.
6. In their religious affairs the Sikh Panth has never tolerated government interfere. Nor will it do so in the future. Sikhs have always solved their problems using their own value systems in the Sikh Sangat. The Panth is fully capable of handling its own affairs.

*(Courtesy : A Report by Bibi Baljit Kaur)*

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FARMERS' SUICIDES IN RURAL PUNJAB

We reproduce below two letters written by Sardar Inderjit Singh Jaijee, Convenor, Movement Against State Repression, to President of India and President, SGPC, Amritsar on the basis of a comprehensive Survey of Debt Related Suicides, conducted by this organization in the Munak Sub-division of District Sangrur, Punjab for the period 1988-2006 updated to April 2007. The detailed documented data can be collected from Sardar Inderjit Singh, Convenor MASR, House No 1501, Sector 36-D, Chandigarh.

— Editor

1

Dear Dr Kalam

We have frequently written to you as well as your predecessors to call attention to the urgent needs of Punjab's farmers. Rural suicides are the most drastic symptom of Punjab's deepening agrarian crisis. It is regrettable that despite the magnitude of this problem neither the

Central Government nor the State Government is willing to acknowledge the problem or take corrective measures. Rather the government is deliberately concealing the problem. Punjab ceased being a disturbed area more than a decade ago and there can be no reason for underplaying economic distress and rural suicides.

To date, no district, or even a subdivision has been surveyed comprehensively even for one single year. The MASR survey of Munak Subdivision of district Sangrur is the most complete – it covers all 93 villages in the subdivision – its timeframe is 19 years (1988 to 2006) and it includes data not only on the name of the victim but also means of committing suicide, age, landholding, quantum of debt. This census is supported by panchayat affidavits for each case, a methodology now accepted by the National Farmers Commission and recommended to the states.

The late Aman Sidhu who carried out the Munak subdivision survey, covered all 93 villages and collected 1445 cases –1276 which are verified and supported by panchayat affidavits. (Affadavits enclosed.) Many more cases are in process of documentation. Perhaps a hundred odd cases may be unreported. In January and February of 2007, another ten persons committed suicide in Munak Subdivision. These are cases that came to our knowledge incidentally; there may be more. (List enclosed.)

At its programme in Bathinda on September 7, the BKU (Ekta) released the following suicide data (random sample) that it collected using the MASR format:

| | District | Total No villages | No villages sampled | Suicides | Per village average | Extrapolated district total |
|---|-----------|-------------------|---------------------|----------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Bathinda | 281 | 70 | 750 | 10.71 | 3010 |
| 2 | Faridkot | 171 | 5 | 25 | 5 | 855 |
| 3 | Ferozepur | 1003 | 13 | 77 | 5.92 | 5938 |
| 4 | Ludhiana | 918 | 5 | 12 | 2.4 | 2203 |
| 5 | Mansa | 240 | 46 | 424 | 9.21 | 2210 |
| 6 | Moga | 329 | 33 | 475 | 14.39 | 4736 |
| 7 | Muktsar | 234 | 16 | 61 | 3.81 | 892 |
| 8 | Sangrur | 693 | 73 | 1046 | 14.32 | 9923 |
| Extrapolated total for this 8 district sample | | | | | | 28766 |

The table is clear, but just to illustrate, using one district: According to official districts statistics there are 281 inhabited villages in Bathinda. The BKU (E) team sampled 70 taking all known cases for the period 1990 to 2006. We see that 750 suicides were documented from 70 villages.

Regarding MASR's Munak Subdivision survey, 1445 suicides for 93 villages of Munak Subdivision gave an average of 15.5 suicides per village. Sangrur has 693 inhabited villages, so 15.5 times 693 equals 10,741 suicide cases for the period 1988 to 2006 in Sangrur district. BKU (E) data works out close to the same figure, so it can safely be said that MASR has not exaggerated the suicide situation. When MASR's estimates a suicide toll of minimum 40,000 for the entire state over 19 years, it does so on the basis of a much lower presumed per village average on the grounds that not all of Punjab's 12,400 villages may be as distressed as those in Munak subdivision. An accurate survey might show a higher toll, perhaps up to 60,000 victims.

Although the evidence is strongly to the contrary, the Punjab government clings to a figure of 2,116 rural suicides for the entire state for period 1988 to 2004. MASR hopes that you will urge the Punjab government to have an accurate census of rural suicides conducted through the *gram panchayats* and that you will recommend suitable compensatory and debt waiver measures as a first immediate step for the impoverished rural community.

With respects,

Yours sincerely,

Inderjit Singh Jajee, Convenor

MASR

~ ~ ~

2

Dear Sardar Avtar Singh Ji,

Some 75 per cent of Punjab's Sikh population resides in villages; they have been impoverished to such an extent that they are taking their own lives. Starvation has become a reality in rural Punjab, particularly where families have lost their earning members or have been forced to sell their land to repay usurious and illegal loans to *arhtiyas*. As per the state government's own report to the Centre (Status Report 2004), more than 80 per cent of those committing suicide are Sikhs.

In just two blocks of Sangrur district, namely, Lehra and Andana, which we have closely monitored for years, about 160 farmers and labourers took their own lives within the short period of 18 months. It

is no better in adjoining blocks. Indeed, reports from all over the state reveal an alarming rise in the rural suicide rate; an estimated 3,000-plus *kisans* and *mazdoors* take their own lives each year. Left with no means of support after the death of earning members, sometimes other members of the family feel compelled to take the extreme step. Cases of multiple suicides in families are becoming increasingly common. The situation is not going to get better; rather agricultural economists predict rapid collapse of the state's rural economy. The next three to five years will see one economic shock after another. If only it were a matter of figures and statistics: unfortunately, the transformation will be paid for with human misery. Since 1998, on an average, every village has lost 16 men to suicides.

Farmers are committing suicide under the pressure of loans of as little as a few thousand rupees to compare this to the situation of industrialists who owe thousands of *crores* to the banks yet continue to enjoy every luxury of life as well as the respect of society.

In the times of the Gurus, frequent invasions and natural catastrophes kept village society in a perpetual state of vulnerability. The Gurus' answer to this was community self-help and sharing – *Sangat* and *Pangat* – and their succinct three-point directive: *naam japo, kirat karo, wand chakka*. It is useless to look to the state for relief; it is the state that has brought us to this pass. The villager's only source of help is his neighbour. The Gurus intended the institution of *langar* to bind the community together, reactivating it now will strengthen village solidarity and bring them closer to the Gurus. Those who have must be willing to share the burden of those who have not out of a sense of fellow-feeling and moral obligation was the custom in earlier days.

Today the SGPC controls gurdwaras in Punjab and Haryana areas where economic crisis is most deeply felt. The SGPC is also in a position to influence local village gurdwaras in these states that are not under its direct control. There is scarcely a village in Punjab without a gurdwara. This position of leadership should be used to strongly activate the institution of *langar* in all gurdwaras to ensure that no hungry person goes away unfed. The SGPC-run gurdwaras should monitor *langar* activity at strategic gurdwaras per village cluster and provide rations and other assistance for *langar*.

In many families, adults may feel embarrassed to reveal the extent of their poverty by coming for *langar*, but they will send their children. In a few days, it is likely that the parents will overcome their reticence and themselves come to the gurdwara. The *pracharaks* should be instructed to encourage the practice of *langar* and counsel against suicide as an un-Sikh practice.

Emergency measures are required to hold out a bare minimum of survival to village families, as Sikhs, our principle is *garib da mooh, guru di golak*, in other words, to feed the hungry is the same as making an offering to the Guru. Let the SGPC put this concept into practice by directing all the gurdwaras it manages, and advising others, to offer daily morning and evening *langars* through *kar seva*. No one should go hungry. For at least the next two years, please put construction activity on hold and divert the funds to *langar*.

Yours sincerely,
Inderjit Singh Jaijee,
Convenor

~~~

## Letters to Editor

### INTERNATIONAL SIKH CONFEDERATION

Dear Editor,

Please accept my heartiest congratulations on the excellent work being done by the ISC. I was very heartened to read about the seminar and its findings on the state of Education in Punjab. It is an eye opener. Is it possible to have a full copy of the seminar proceedings and the report?

I have a few suggestions for your consideration:

1. When I was a student at the Khalsa High School at Nankana Sahib, all our teachers were Sabat Surat Sikhs with utmost dedication to the cause of teaching. Each one was a role model in integrity, sincerity, and uprightness. We had a compulsory period in Sikh studies every day. You were not promoted to the next class if you failed in it. I do hope that the institutions established under the Sikh Education Fund would keep this in mind.
2. It would be much easier if the ISC was to establish a branch in each country say USA, Canada, UK and others and have these sub offices registered as Charitable Institutions for "Sikh Children

Education and Development Fund" in each country as per the local requirement. This charitable status would encourage many to donate for the noble cause.

3. I also understand that any funds collected abroad can only be sent to an organization in India after Reserve Bank of India's permission under FERA. Rules might have changed but it must be got clarified and all loose ends tied up.
4. Another area needing immediate attention is use of Press media in Punjab and Delhi to expose this sorry state of affairs and utter lack of interest in the field of Education by the Punjab Govt. District-wise reports (appearing say weekly) with the names of villages and towns schools highlighting their dismal performance and reasons thereof, i.e., lack of staff, unqualified staff, lack of facilities, etc., should be brought in the limelight. Politicians and Bureaucrats are both very sensitive to adverse publicity.
5. The aim should be to shame the local MPs and MLAs and compel them to spend part of their discretionary development grants to improve the standards of education in their constituencies, in addition to putting normal pressure on the Government.
6. An area about which I find no mention, is establishment of a Sikh Missionary College of highest standards, with the purpose of training knowledgeable village / town gurdwara *granthis* with deep understanding of *Gurbani* and Sikh history. These gurdwara *Granthis* should help prepare the young Sikhs' psyche towards excelling in whatever they choose to do in life, towards an ethical and truthful living in tune with Guru Granth Sahib teachings. The *granthi* has to be a role model for the Sikhs in the village on all counts. To me this is the most urgent and critical need of the day for the Sikhs in Punjab.

Wishing you the best in this noble cause.

Sincerely yours,

Col Avtar Singh (retd)

# 2339 - 68 Corporate Drive

Scarborough, Ontario – M1H 3H3 Canada.

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1. To bring the latest advances in Sikh Studies to the notice of scholars and general readers.
2. To project a correct image of Sikhism and the Sikh Community in India as well as abroad.
3. To watch, report and rebut any distortions or misrepresentations of Sikh Religion and its History.
4. To serve as a living link, and provide coordination among organisations engaged in promotion of Sikh Studies.
5. To highlight problems of Sikh diaspora, and suggest solutions.
6. To arrange reviews of important publications relating to Sikhism.
7. To assist readers in framing an informed opinion on matters relating to Sikhism and Sikh Studies.
8. To give publicity to activities of various Sikh Societies around the world.
9. To act as a forum for expression of readers' views.
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# ABSTRACTS OF SIKH STUDIES

(Vol IX, Issue 4)

Oct-Dec 2007 / 539 NS

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## EDITORIAL

### THE CHANGING DEMOGRAPHY OF PUNJAB

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We are living in the age of democracy in which numbers count and majority rules. At the time of the partition of India in 1947, Sikhs were recognised as one of the three contenders for power, when the British decided to quit. Muslims were in a sizeable majority in the eastern as well as western parts of the Indian sub-continent, which entitled them to Pakistan. Sikh population was scattered. The only area where they were marginally in a majority was one *tahsil* (Taran Tarn) of Amritsar district. Therefore, the question of an independent Sikh state or Khalistan did not arise. The British were in a hurry to leave. An eleventh hour proposal that could have taken care of the interests of majority of the Sikh population, besides some Hindu population in the areas that went to Pakistan, was to create an 'Azad Punjab' between India and Pakistan with areas drawn from both sides of the present border. In this state, the Hindus and Muslims were almost equal in numbers. The Sikhs would still be in a minority, but would hold the balance of power. Had this scheme materialised, no forced exchange of population would have been necessary, and the riots and bloodshed in which *lakhs* were killed, and millions rendered homeless, would have been avoided. Jinnah was agreeable, provided the Sikhs agreed to cede this state to Pakistan. Sikhs wanted the right to secede in case their experience with Pakistan was not happy. Jinnah would not concede this under any circumstances. That was the end of the proposal. Sikhs had to choose between Pakistan and Indian Union. The Sikh leadership, in their wisdom, opted for the latter. This was a natural decision in view of the age-old ties between Hindus and Sikhs, and their common suffering under Muslim rule in earlier history. Congress leaders including Mahatma Gandhi gave solemn assurance

to the Sikhs that India would not adopt any constitution that was unacceptable to Sikhs. Pandit Nehru was magnanimous enough to declare that an area could be carved out in North India, where the brave Sikhs could enjoy a 'glow of freedom', which they richly deserved.

Unfortunately, the trust reposed in the Congress leadership proved to be misplaced, and a Constitution was adopted which Sikh members of the constituent Assembly had refused to sign in protest. When reminded of his promises, Pandit Nehru replied, "Times have changed."

The Congress was committed to formation of linguistic states. The exercise was undertaken in 1956. While unilingual states were created for all other languages, the same was denied to Punjabi language for no other reason than that the Sikhs could be in a majority in that state. Obviously, care was taken that Sikhs do not, by any chance, enjoy the promised 'glow of freedom', because 'times had changed'. In fact, the Patiala and the East Punjab States Union (PEPSU), where Sikhs had a slight majority, was merged with the surrounding areas of Punjab.

This flagrant discrimination forced a prolonged struggle on the Sikhs, which ended in 1966 when a truncated Punjabi-speaking state was conceded in a manner utterly devoid of grace. Large tracts of Punjabi-speaking areas were taken out and distributed between Himachal Pradesh and the newly created state of Haryana. Its Capital, along with the surrounding Punjabi-speaking rural areas, was taken over by the Centre as a Union Territory. Its river waters, its only natural resource, were also taken over by the centre. Under the Constitution, river waters is a state subject, but Punjab was deprived of its constitutional right of control of river waters, so that the bulk of the Punjab river waters continues to flow into the non-riparian states of Haryana and Rajasthan, absolutely *gratis*. In the mean time, Punjab farmers have been forced to install over a million tubewells to partially meet the water requirements of their crops, involving an investment of billions of rupees on the part of poor Punjab farmers. These tubewells have to be deepened continually. The water table is falling rapidly so that Punjab is heading fast towards desert conditions.

What is even more astonishing is the fact that the bridge electricity

power from the Punjab rivers, also goes to the non-riparian states in the same proportion as water. The Sikhs may well be asked, "Why did you accept such a truncated state, no more than a dignified Zila Parishad, with such adverse conditions attached?" The wisdom of the choice is indeed questionable. The only consideration that seems to have weighed with Sikh leadership, has been the need for a sizeable geographical unit, where Sikhs could claim a majority. Here was an opportunity they did not want to miss. They hoped also that the inequities and the apparent injustice in the creation of the Punjabi-speaking state would be removed in the course of time through persuasion or agitation. The view can be appreciated, since the community had suffered so much in the past in the game of numbers.

In 1966, when the present state of Punjab came into being, the Sikhs constituted about 60.5% of its total population of 135.5 *lakhs*. By 2001, the total population rose to 24,621,326 out of which approximately 146 *lakhs* were Sikhs (59.9%), against the Hindu population of 89.98 *lakhs* (36.9%). Apparently, these figures show that with the formation of the present-day Punjab, the Sikh objective of having a Sikh majority state as a political base for safeguarding their religion, culture, traditions, etc., was achieved. The events of the past few decades, however, do not support such a conclusion. More often than not, the state has been ruled by the Hindu-dominated Congress. Only for brief intervals during this period, has the SAD, considered a representative body of the Sikhs, been able to constitute a government in the state, and that, too, with the support of BJP Hindus, rather than on its own strength.

The apparent majority of Sikhs in the state secured at a tremendous cost, is also very precarious. There are a number of factors that continue to erode its base. For example, Sikhs have seldom been united under one political flag. Large sections among them belong to Namdhari, Radha Swami, and even Nirankari sects that have traditionally been counted as Sikhs. They have seldom voted with the Panth. It is doubtful if they would return themselves as Sikhs, if they had the choice to enlist themselves as members of their own separate sects in the census. Then, there are the Mazbhi Sikhs, Ramdasias and some other so-called backward classes who are not happy with the social treatment meted out to them, particularly in the rural areas.

Other factors that tend to dilute the majority of Sikhs are the large number of *deras* operating in the state which have attracted a following that cannot be ignored. We are only aware of the role of Sacha Sauda in the Feb 2007 state Assembly elections in the Punjab. Such *deras* are obviously on the way out of the Sikh fold.

In addition to the above, mention must be made of the following factors which affect the balance of population and threaten the Sikh majority status in the State:

- Influx of labour from the neighboring states. They are all non-Sikhs. While seasonal labour from other states is welcome, and even necessary for seasonal farm operations, it is highly probable that their seasonal visit might lead to their permanent settlement in Punjab. Political parties encourage them in all possible ways to settle here to serve as their vote banks. The number of such immigrants as were born outside Punjab, was 17.5 *laks* in 2001, and is believed to be higher today. Most of them are non-Sikhs from the surrounding states of Haryana, Rajasthan, UP and Himachal Pradesh, besides Bihar.
- The accursed operation Blue Star and the repression of Sikhs that followed it for several years, led to the killing of countless number of young Sikhs. A sizeable number of them escaped to other countries as refugees or political asylees.
- The widely prevalent evil of female foeticide in the state has led to a dangerous imbalance in female to male sex ratio, which is fraught with serious social implications.
- Industrial and economic policies followed by the central and state governments affect the movement of labour as well as structure of population in the state adversely.
- Lack of quality education in rural areas of the Punjab renders the rural youth unfit for jobs in the emerging information technology and other technical jobs. These industries have to draw upon other states to meet their requirements, at the cost of local population.

No systematic studies have been made to assess the incidence of these factors. It is recognised, however, that these, and possibly many more, have far-reaching implications. These have already jeopardised the security expected from a Sikh majority state. Theoretically, Sikhs



constitute the majority community in the Punjab, but if the factors pointed out above continue to operate unchecked, one fine (?) morning we might wake up to find that Sikhs are no more the majority community in the Punjab. This might happen sooner than later. The situation demands serious notice. The impact of various forces at work has to be studied, trends in the changing population structure identified, and suitable corrective measures taken in time. Else, we might inevitably go back to the pre-1966 times, necessitating another prolonged struggle.

It is gratifying that the Institute of Sikh Studies is holding a seminar on the theme 'THE CHANGING DEMOGRAPHY OF PUNJAB' at its campus in Chandigarh on the 10-11<sup>th</sup> November, 2007. Top scholars have been invited to present papers on various aspects of the problem. Eminent economist Dr Sardara Singh Johl, formerly Deputy Chairman, Punjab State, Planning Board, has agreed to deliver the keynote address. We hope the exercise will yield recommendations of far-reaching significance, which will help the planners as well as leaders of the political parties holding power in handling the problem on a long-term basis.

□

*It is essential that one should be as one claims.  
His aspect should be of a brave, not of a coward, person.  
Such a one may be called God's image,  
Who may fulfil the desires of others.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 1245

ਜੈਸਾ ਕਰੈ ਕਹਾਵੈ ਤੈਸਾ ਐਸੀ ਬਨੀ ਜਰੂਰਤਿ ॥  
ਹੋਵਹਿ ਲਿਖਿ ਤਿਛਿ ਨਹ ਹੋਵਹਿ ਐਸੀ ਕਹੀਐ ਸੂਰਤਿ ॥  
ਜੇ ਓਸੁ ਇਛੇ ਸੇ ਫਲੁ ਪਾਏ ਤਾਂ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਹੀਐ ਮੂਰਤਿ ॥

## THE FOUNDATION OF SIKH EXEGESIS

BALWANT SINGH\*

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The sacred writings preserved in the Sikh Scripture are known as *gurbani*. As proclaimed by Guru Nanak and his successors, *bani* is not merely a product of speculation or imagination but the highest kind of revelation received directly from the Divine.<sup>1</sup> Ever since its first codification in 1604, this Sikh Scripture has been looked upon as the most authentic repository of the divine 'Word'. It enjoys an unparalleled place of prominence in the Sikh way of life. Guru Granth Sahib is not merely a scripture but an eternal Guru which has guided the Sikh Panth to reinterpret itself at different stages of its history.

The history of Sikh Scripture can easily be traced back to the times of Guru Nanak whose experience of the Numinous forms its very core as well as its basis. An examination of Guru Nanak's hymns makes it abundantly clear that he considered himself a divine minstrel whose chief avocation was to sing the glorious attributes of God.<sup>2</sup> He made the divine 'Will' known through the medium of *bani* which left an indelible imprint on the subsequent growth of Sikh scriptural tradition. It provided a powerful stimulus to his successors who not only took keen interest in preserving its originality, but also added their own spiritual hymns to the received text. Though a number of saints have contributed to the Sikh Scripture, yet the whole literature enshrined in it, is religious in nature. It sets it apart from other poetical compositions.

The Sikh Scripture derives its authority from the self-illuminating eternal Truth. Every hymn of it focuses on the Ultimate Reality, which is *Sui-generis*, Transcendental and Immanent as well. The Sikh Scripture

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attempts to make God known through His names, attributes and acts of grace. In fact, the whole *bani* underlines the divine mission of Guru Nanak, and communicates knowledge about God. One way of knowing God is the way of love which develops into an intimate feeling of His sacred presence all around in this world. It is an extra-ordinary experience that belongs to the spiritual realm. It can be experienced directly at personal level, but cannot be communicated as such from one person to another. The validity of this truth or knowledge depends upon the intimacy and intensity of experience of the recipient. In the Primitive religions, this type of experience is expressed in the ecstatic utterances of the *shamans*. However, in the Sikh scripture, yearning for union with God and pangs of separation from Him have been expressed through the analogy of a matrimonial relationship. The nature of this unique, highly personal and transforming experience has been explained through the mystic terms such as *anand*, *vismad*, *sahaj*, *atamras*, *turiya pad*, *anhad nad*, etc. It is beyond the ken of empirical observations and rational verification. The words and language cannot convey its full import. Therefore, metaphors, symbols and similes are employed to explain it. Sometimes the full sense and correct meanings of the metaphors and mystical terms are beyond the comprehension of people where the exegetical nuances play a crucial role.

The subject of exegesis, i.e., explanation of the written text has always been of central importance to all the religious traditions of the world. The development, exposition and vitality of any religion can be understood from the attempts at its exegesis. Christianity has developed the field of hermeneutics, exegesis and systematic theology as specialized subjects to interpret its texts. Similarly in the Indian tradition, *teeka* (commentary), *bhashay* (exegesis) and *paramarth* (spiritual meaning) have been very popular subjects in the religious literature. An examination of the history of Sikh exegesis reveals that its origin, earlier approaches, methods and purpose were quite different.

The divine knowledge contained in the *bani* is eternal. It is relevant for all times and for all peoples. The spiritual experience expressed in it belongs to the category of prophetic experience. Neither it can be transmitted from one person to another, nor it can be expressed in its totality. That is why the nature of its language is always quite different from that of the secular or ordinary language of daily usage.

To express this experience in the form of words and language is the first step towards its explanation. In this way, the *bani* of Guru Nanak is the first attempt which explains his spiritual encounter with God. Thus, the self-explanation of Sikhism in the form of *bani* that began with Guru Nanak and corroborated by his successors unfolds the process of Sikh exegesis at work. The need to preserve the religious experience of Guru Nanak and his successors in its original form resulted in the formation of the Sikh canon. The *bani* of the Sikh Gurus served the purpose of a canon, and played a major role to decide about the fundamental teachings of Sikhism. With the formation of canon, attempts to explain its percepts began. Resultantly, various traditions of Sikh exegesis came into existence which were known for their peculiar ways, means, methods and motives. It is worth noting that any exegetical school may incorporate the prevalent means, methods and techniques, yet it cannot ignore the authenticity of the canon.

As described earlier, the Sikh Gurus had expressed their experience of the Numinous in the form of *bani*. According to them, *gurbani* represents the *sabad*, i.e., logos, which is present everywhere in this universe. Therefore, *gurbani* is the divine revelation, which came to manifest itself through the 'Spirit of Nanak'. In other words, *bani* of Guru Nanak is the first attempt to reveal and explain the divine mission for which he has been commissioned by God. The exegetical process of the Sikh text can be traced back to the times of Guru Nanak. In this context, the testimony of Bhai Gurdas is very revealing. He says:

When Baba Nanak came to stay at Kartarpur

He discarded the ascetic robes.

He donned the family dress

And, sitting on the bedstead, started preaching

His mission... He revealed his message

Through the medium of *bani* in order to enlighten his disciples.

It was

Always followed by dialogue and discourse on the spiritual matters.<sup>3</sup>

On the basis of above evidence, we can well imagine that alongwith the *bani* tradition of religious discourse to expound the

percepts of *bani*, it owes its origin to Guru Nanak.

Guru Nanak's *bani* was the major catalyst which inspired his successors to compose new hymns. A close reading of their hymns reveals that at some places they have elaborated and commented upon the concepts that had been underlined by Guru Nanak. Prof Taran Singh has categorized it as the *Sahaj parnali*, i.e., tradition of spontaneous interpretation. He quotes some passages from the writings of later Sikh Gurus where they have provided interpretation of the works of their predecessors.<sup>4</sup> In this context the best example of expounding the meanings of scripture through the medium of scripture is offered by Guru Ram Das. For example:

ਜਪਿ ਮਨ ਨਿਰਭਉ ॥ ਸਤਿ ਸਤਿ ਸਦਾ ਸਤਿ ॥ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ॥  
ਆਜੂਨੀ ਸੰਭਉ ॥ ਮੇਰੇ ਮਨ ਅਨਦਿਨੋ ਧਿਆਇ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰੁ ਨਿਰਾਹਾਰੀ ॥<sup>5</sup>

And also:

ਸਭਿ ਧਿਆਵਹੁ ਆਦਿ ਸਤੇ ਜੁਗਾਦਿ ਸਤੇ ਪਰਤਖਿ ਸਤੇ ॥  
ਸਦਾ ਸਦਾ ਸਤੇ ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਦਾਸੁ ਦਸੋਨਾ ॥<sup>6</sup>

One cannot fail to note that above verses read like a commentary on the *Mulmantra* and the *saloka* immediately following it. The use of scripture to expound the text and to define the technical terms is the most valid and reliable method of exegesis. The Sikh Gurus have resorted to the above methodology at a number of places in the Sikh Scripture.

Sometimes, the *bani* of Guru Nanak is considered a commentary on his *Japuji* and, in similar fashion, the hymns of the later Gurus are taken as elaboration of the works of Guru Nanak.<sup>7</sup> Actually, neither the Sikh Gurus had done it consciously, nor their writings can be divested of their originality. If the *bani* of later Gurus helps us to understand the works of Guru Nanak, that does not mean that it is of supplementary character. In fact, the whole Sikh Scripture is the self-expression of the 'Spirit of Nanak'. Therefore, the *bani* of succeeding Gurus is an integral part of the original experience. In case we are to consider *gurbani* as one of the traditions of exegesis, then we can say that the whole Sikh Scripture is an attempt to express and explain the experience of Numinous that the Sikh Gurus had got in the form of *sabad*. It is the first authentic and authoritative explanation of Sikhism. Neither the later tradition of exegesis can overrule it, nor they can ignore the parameters underlined in it. Any attempt on the contrary

would dilute the originality of the experience of *bani*. The touchstone for any exegesis would be *gurbani*, which is the original source of Sikhism.

In the field of Sikh exegesis, next in importance to *gurbani* come the works of Bhai Gurdas. He was a close associate of the third, fourth, fifth and sixth Sikh Gurus, and had seen the development of Sikhism from very close quarters. He had been amanuensis to Guru Arjun to help him compile and canonize the Sikh Scripture. In fact, he was the most qualified and learned Sikh of his times whose knowledge of *gurbani* and its theology was par-excellence. He is the author of 39 *Vars* and 556 *Kabit Swayyas* which hold the status of key to the understanding of Guru Granth Sahib. In *Sikhan Di Bhagatmala*, an eighteenth century Sikh source attributed to Bhai Mani Singh, there is an interesting anecdote attributed to Guru Arjun which describes that:

Bhai Harbans Tapa used to read the *bani* of Granth Ji in the early morning, and during the third quarter of the day he read the works of Bhai Gurdas. One day he enquired from the Guru whether the Sikhs should read the writings of Bhai Gurdas or not. The Guru replied that his rivals are ignorant and they have composed poetry out of jealousy only. They have not taken any guidance from the *sabad*. That type of poetry has been banned. The works of Bhai Gurdas are just like *teeka* (commentary) on the *sabad*. It helps to attain the spirit of Sikhism.

The above statement provides a peep into the acceptability and respect that Bhai Gurdas' works enjoyed in the Sikh circles. We observe that the oral exposition of *gurbani* in the form of dialogue and discourse that began with Guru Nanak at Kartarpur, was continued by the later Gurus also. The *bani* of Guru Ram Das testifies to the fact that the Sikhs used to visit the Guru to have a dialogue with him on the spiritual matters.<sup>9</sup> Bhai Gurdas also informs that after having filled the treasure of *gurbani*, Guru Arjun was always engrossed in propagating it through the medium of *katha* (discourse) and *kirtan* (divine music).<sup>10</sup> We are told that Bhai Gurdas was a great oral exponent of *gurbani*.<sup>11</sup> On the instructions of Guru Arjun, he started regular *katha* (oral exposition) which was held after the *kirtan* of *Asa di Var* in

Darbar Sahib, Amritsar.<sup>12</sup>

A careful perusal of the works of Bhai Gurdas confirms that his *Vars* are basically concerned with the mission of Guru Nanak which had fructified in the form of a new religion. He presents it in the context of contemporary milieu, and establishes that it has its own system of doctrines. He defines very carefully and logically all the concepts of Sikh theology, and pinpoints the basic features of Sikh way of life. His *Kabit-Swayyas* unfold the nature of Sikh mysticism. The first exposition of *Japuji* outside the Guru Granth Sahib is found in the works of Bhai Gurdas especially in *Var* 8 and 21.<sup>13</sup>

Sometimes his works read like a commentary on the *bani*. For example, his exposition of the *Mulmantra* and the concluding *saloka* of the *Japuji* present a wonderful exposition in verse.<sup>14</sup> He depicts deep understanding of the Indian religious tradition and its mythology. Besides, he was a keen observer of the contemporary social, religious and cultural milieu. He employed this knowledge very perfectly in order to expound the cause of Sikhism. For example, in the first *Var* he puts a question mark on the relevance of Hinduism and Islam, and provides legitimacy to the origin of Sikhism. He is a great exponent of the Sikh culture, and does not miss any opportunity to depict its unique and independent identity. He makes liberal use of Indian mythology and philosophical systems in order to illustrate his viewpoint. He possesses uncommon poetic talent to describe the whole epic of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* in a single stanza only.<sup>15</sup> The purpose is not to propagate them, but to elaborate the percepts of *gurbani*. Not only he uses the parables from mythology, he has the ingenuity to employ the metaphors, symbols and similes taken from local surroundings and culture. Sometimes he refers to a series of metaphors to emphasize a point. One thing must be kept in mind that neither he uses logic like a Christian theologian, nor he attempts his exegesis in the form of a systematic theology.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, he does not behave like a *teekakar* to unfold the meanings of the words. His chief motive is to present the Sikh beliefs and the mission of the Sikh Gurus in the context of contemporary milieu and, for it, he has followed the technique of *gurbani*. That is why his works have acquired the status of an extended canon. He combines the qualities of a theologian and

an exegete so well, that none can surpass him in his style and richness of expression. The methods and techniques employed by Bhai Gurdas are so powerful and convincing that all these qualities have made his exposition the most authoritative one. Whenever there has been a need for authentic exposition of Sikhism, the Panth has always taken recourse to take inspiration and guidance from Bhai Gurdas and his works.

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INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AND GURU GRANTH SAHIB

JODH SINGH*

Dialogical nature of man is the common theme of contemporary philosophy, in general. In fact, dialogue is an interpersonal and intersubjective method of communication of oneself with the other. The existentialists do not accept the other as a transcendent reality, whereas the other is considered as Maya by Advaita Vedanta, and as a grand illusion by almost all the mystics and philosophers of India.

Born as a Jewish child in Russia, Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), a French philosopher pondering over the end of metaphysics not only realised but also suffered the outcome of the direct connections between the historical horrors of the Nazi period and the philosophical idea of neutral and impersonal "Being". It further implies the ontology as the attempt to reduce the other to the same or 'beings' to 'Being' reverberating the hidden agenda of imperialist domination through tyranny.

However, Guru Nanak's supreme Being is not a neutral impersonal entity who has nothing to do with the wailings and sufferings of the beings created by Him. Guru Granth Sahib says that He is diffused profusely in all the three worlds and is always with the beings. When the human beings are butchered by the tyrannical oppressors of mankind, He is not required to be neutral and is bound to take sides of the downtrodden and oppressed ones. Rather, full of anguish, Guru Nanak does not hesitate in blaming the Lord for watching the mighty, shredding to pieces the weaker ones - *Khurasan khasmana kia Hindustan draia.... eti mar pai kawrlane tain ki daradu na aia* (Guru Granth Sahib,

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p 360). Guru Granth Sahib, out of the sense of 'goodness without any calculation', holds that fight for righteousness and justice should be fought, even if it is not related to one's own particular religion or social group. Guru Tegh Bahadur set a healthy model of goodness of human reality in the medieval period-fanatical scenario of India where he laid down his life for the safety of Brahminic society and faith of which he was neither a member nor had he ever accepted its tenets. It was the urge to defend ethical values, justice and religious freedom, which inspired him to put his head under the tyrannical ruler's sword.

Promotion and diffusion of goodness without any calculation, ethical values, justice and religious freedom, require the openness of heart and mind which may be attained through the dialogue with the different layers of the society. Says Levinas, "One is required to work on one's ownself and to go toward the other where he is truly other from whom, for an insufficiently mature soul, hatred flows naturally or is deduced with infallible logic. The themes of 'historical rights', right of enrootedness, 'undeniable principles' are required to be avoided." Discussing the boundaries and scope of dialogue, Levinas adds further by saying, "One must refuse to be caught up in the tangle of abstractions, whose principles are often evident, but whose dialectic, be it so rigorous, is murderous and criminal." However, he recommends the proximity of the honest, attentive and vigilant persons for tackling a tension, but he feels that without any definite project before them and mutual dialogue, the proximity of such persons even may resemble sleep, which is not going to solve any problem. Rather, these persons will fade away into words, will get lost in technical questions, or freeze up into an institution or structures only. A new solidarity and religiosity through meaningful dialogue is required to be evolved by recognizing and identifying those insoluble substances which have the potential of exploding in violence, guile or politics.

In Guru Granth Sahib, the dialogue is the wholesome process of knowing, saying and understanding (Guru Granth Sahib, p 1411). For the accomplishment of this process, Guru Granth Sahib, while telling the people *Jab lagi dunia rahie Nanak kichhu suniai kichhu kabia*¹, further stresses that apart from having meaningful and factual dialogue, one should take care of the self-analysis first. In fact, *Gurbani* is well

aware of the fact that those, whose mind is all-dark do not stand true to their words. Their lotus heart is inverted and does not bloom; therefore, their high verbosity notwithstanding, they, in fact, exhibit their inner ugliness. But those who are the accomplished persons, are of dialogical nature, and have the humble competence of saying something as well as of understanding a viewpoint in its proper context. Guru Nanak hails such persons by calling them the competent persons (*sugharh*).

manhu ji andhe ghuṛ kabia biradu na janani
mani andhai undhai kaval disani khare karuṇ
*iki kahi janani kabia bhujani te nar sugharh saruṇ*²

According to Guru Granth Sahib, *Gurbani* the *sambad* or dialogue is the effort towards understanding the genuineness of the issues posed. In this great scripture, the base of a worthy life is the doctrine that one should have partnership with the virtues of the people and should keep away from mischiefs – *sanjh karijai gunah keri chhodi avagan chaliai*.³ Guru Granth Sahib gives no recognition to life lived in monasteries or jungles. It rather approves that life which prepares the individual to be of the-world while not becoming worldly. Sikh life is the life of responsibility towards the surroundings, and, therefore, its spirituality and spiritual dialogue have some distinction from other ways of life. Sikh religion gives due importance to man as an individual, but it does not allow the interests of the society to be sacrificed for the sake of one man, howsoever great or high he may be. It approves humanitarianism, but not humanism of the West, because humanism can flourish only in autocracy, apostasy and narrowness of heart and mind. The dialogue with others with a view to conquering one and all absolutely, does not fit in the thought frame of Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Nanak, being fully conscious of the egoist personality likely to emerge from debating behaviour pattern of the society, says that the researcher flourishes whereas the debater perishes – *khoji upajai badi binasai hau bali gur kartard*.⁴ Debate creates suicidal ego known as the chronic ailment (*diragh roga*) in *Gurbani*. Only *seva* or the 'service' can help get rid of this malady and the service alone can fill one's heart with love. Guru Amar Das further the view of Guru Nanak by saying – *badi binsahi sevak sevahi gur kai beti piar*⁵ – the debater perishes and

the humble-servant of the Guru serves with love and devotion. Namdev also holds that if somebody is desirous of enjoying the *Ram-rasayan*, he should never indulge in polemics – *bad bibad kabu sio na kijai, rasana ram rasayan pijai*.⁶

To save the self from polemical and disputational egotist mentality, the Sikh religion and the Guru Granth Sahib talk of a meaningful, factual and self-analysing dialogue. Indeed, the Guru Granth Sahib clearly denotes two types of dialogue. The first form of the dialogue is the dialogue with the self, the self-appraisal or peeping into the self. Before the external dialogue, the *Gurbani* inspires first to look into one's own heart and mind. Getting face to face with one's own self, one comes to know about his or her own meanness, shallowness, the layers of self-interests, greeds and diplomacies. So long as we do not cleanse out the dirt of above-named propensities with the broom of knowledge acquired through contemplation, we cannot become pure, and unpolluted and our external dialogue cannot be meaningful.

Self-analysis or the dialogue with the self brings the stage of autosuggestion. For autosuggestion, one need not go in search of any guru in person. The basic truths of life are so simple, straight and few in number, that every individual can imbibe these in his own self. The world is not stable; everything is in a flux, which is always in a forward motion. Then, why this fat ego? The realization how much this ego has made one hollow and how much suffering one himself has created, can be attained only by having dialogue with one's own self. Such a person understands that he, while not becoming obstruction in the deeds being performed around by the will of God, should allow the flow of the Divine will through his body unhindered, and should be always active for the victory of the Wondrous Lord (*Wahiguru*). The service to humanity should be considered service to the Lord, and thus spiritual happiness should be cultivated.

The self-analysing person becomes impatient for the glimpse of the divinity of the soul. He does not hesitate to ask himself as to what he should offer to see the light of truth equivalent to the light of myriad of suns, or, in the religious language, the court of the truth (*sacha darbar*). For dialogue, what type of language should he use, so

that the Divine fills him with love for Him. To accept the greatness of the cognitive truth at the appropriate time (*amritvela*) and to live life according to that truth, is the answer that emerges from inside for which no external polemic is needed:

pher ki agai rakhiyai jitu disai darbaru.

muhau ki bolani boliai jitu suni dhare piaru.

*Amrit vela sachu nau vadiyai vicharu.*⁷

The person capable of initiating dialogue with his own self can control the horse race of the mind with full confidence. He, with the help of autosuggestions to the mind, time and again, can make it realize its divine roots: *manu tu joti sarup hai apana mulu pachhanu. mani hari ji terai nali hai gurmati rang manu.*⁸ *e manu meria tu thir rahu chot na khavahi ram.*⁹

But from the points alluded to above, this hypothesis would be wrong that the mind is quite simple and is always eager to attain divinity and could be brought to the right track easily. In Guru Granth Sahib, Kabir is fully conscious of this fact, when he says that mind knows everything but still it undertakes to doing evil. Otherwise, how it is that having a lamp in hand, he is still falling into the well – Kabir *manu janai sabh bat janat he auganu karai. Kabe ki kuslat hathi dipu kue parai.*¹⁰ But even then giving suggestions to mind cannot be stopped, much as the tillage of the land cannot be abandoned because the animals would destroy it, or because of the fear of theft we cannot abandon the purchase of a household. Guru Amar Das, in his longer hymn *Anandu*, goes on to suggest to the mind by saying – *e man meria tu sada rahu hari nale. Hari nali rahu tu manu mere dukh sabhi visarana.*¹¹ (O my mind! be always with the Lord. O mind be with the Lord and all your sufferings will be no more.)

The man who ponders over the greatness of God by himself becoming broadminded, the man who inspires the mind towards understanding its true form, enjoys the virtues of one and all. Such a person wears the silken clothing of pure life, becomes partner in the virtuous enterprises, neither remembers the mischief of others, nor reminds others of their evils. Wherever he goes or joins a discourse, he initiates the welfare of others and joyfully tries to understand the crux of the problems raised. The qualities alluded to above belong to

a dialogical personality hinted at in Raga Suhi hymns by Guru Nanak:

Guna ka hovai vasula kadh vasu laijai
je guna hovani sajana mili sajh karijai
sajh karijai gunah kerī chhodi avagan chaliai
pahire patambar kari adambar apāna pīrhu maliai
jithai jae bahiai bhala kahiai jholi amritu pijai
*guna ka hovai vasula kadhi vasu laijai*¹²

The second type of dialogue delineated in *Gurbani* is the external dialogue which one finds scattered in the whole of Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Nanak knew it very well that the work of reclamation of the withered soul of mankind could not be done without undertaking the device of dialogue. The main objective of his four itineraries was dialogue with the so-called upper and lower strata of the society, the religious pundits and the laity. While understanding their mental agony, he was to find solutions to their problems. In the *salokas* of Kabir recorded in Guru Granth Sahib, the dialogue loaded with social responsibility and spirituality between saint Namdev and Trilochan is there wherein Bhagat Trilochan asks Namdev why he is always busy in printing the cloth and, thus, by getting deeply involved with mammon, has forgotten the name of Ram. Bhagat Namdev replies: O Trilochan, on lips one should have the name of Ram; with hands one should go on earning one's bread and butter, but the heart should remain deeply imbued with the Lord:

Nama maia mohia kahai Tilochanu mit.
kabe chhipahu chhailai Ram na lavahu chitu.
Nama kahai Tilochana mukh te Ramu samali.
*bath pau kari kamu sabb chitu Niranjan nali.*¹³

The first *Var* by Bhai Gurdas puts forth the scene of the dialogue between Guru Nanak and different *yogis*. In this dialogue, the Guru generally maintains his calm and most humbly states to the *yogis* that he has no miracle with him except the true Name of the Lord. But irritated *yogi* Bhangarnath, under the guise of dialogue, sarcastically remarks, "O Nanak, why you have forsaken the garb of *yogis* and have put on the clothes of the householders. By repudiating the guise of the *yoga* indeed, your act is similar to mixing of vinegar with the milk and spoiling it. By doing so, Nanak has spoiled the pure *yogic* life."

Guru Nanak, understanding his arrogance and sarcasm and with a view of putting a small check on his inflated ego, replies in the same vein:

Says Nanak, "O! Bhangarnath your mother (teacher) knows nothing. You do not know how the vessel should be cleansed and hence the odour destroys the fruit therein. You having repudiated household life still go to the householders for begging. But mind it, you will get nothing without putting in something (in the form of labour)¹⁴.

The hagiographical literature pertaining to Guru Nanak, and his hymns in the Guru Granth Sahib make it explicit that the Guru was in continuous discussion with the pedantic *pundits*, the *maulvis*, the *yogis* and a host of *pirs* and *faqirs*. Not only that, he, putting away the idea of mere toleration, flashed before the world a new idea of acceptance of the greatness and truthfulness of others irrespective of caste, colour and creed. To see it through, he collected the hymns of spiritual personalities from different parts of Asia. One's acceptance fills others with love for one and all, and then one enjoys the spirit of dialogue with the others.

In *Gurbani*, the best example of the external dialogue is Guru Nanak's longer hymn *Sidh Gosti* (Guru Granth Sahib, pp 938-946) in which, through a spiritual dialogue, the philosophy of yoga vis-a-vis Sikh philosophy of life has been elucidated. What type of mental balance and stability of mind is required to be held by the discussants, the Guru himself becomes the best example of the same. At the very outset of the hymn, the questions and answers are put to each other. Yogi Charpat asks, "O Nanak! The world is unfathomable expansive sea; give your considered opinion as to how one can get across it." The answer by Guru Nanak, full of courtesy, self-confidence and truth, illustrates the nature, form and tradition of dialogue in Sikhism. Guru Nanak replies, "O Yogil you very well understand the crux of the question you expect me to reply. What answer I can put forth? I sincerely hold that you have already swum (this world ocean) and how could I find fault in your way and process. Of course, you have asked me my way to which I will definitely come. As the lotus, though living in water, does not allow the water to wet its petals and the water fowl

also keeps its wings unwet, likewise by merging *surati* into *sabad* the world ocean may be got crossed.”

Dunia sagaru dutaru kabhai kiu kari paiai paro.

Charpatu bolai audhu Nanak dehu sachu bicharo.

Ape akhai ape samajai tisu kia utaru dijai.

Sachu kabahu tum pargami tujh kia baisanu dijai.

Jaise jal mahi kamal niralam murgai naisane.

*Surati sabadi bhav sagaru tariai Nanak namu vakhane.*¹⁵

This constructive aspect of dialogue, which, without hurting anybody, capacitates a person for explaining his own view-point is the basis of dialogue in Guru Granth Sahib.

Unfortunately, we have discarded such an attitude and the results are obvious. The Sikh community is divided, and almost everybody is playing on his own tambourine. In the *Sidh Gosti*, whether the questions are related to the individual or the common man, whether they are philosophical or ethical, the level of the dialogue is full of serenity, sobriety and mutual respect. In the seventeenth and eighteenth stanzas, the *siddhas* inquire of the Guru as to what is the reason of abandoning the household and why has he put on the garb of a *yogi*, the answer is not only sincere and respectful but candid too – *Gurmukhi khojat bhae udasi. Darsan kai tai bhekh nivasi*, i.e., in the search of Guru-oriented persons, I have donned this garb of an ascetic. In *Sidh Gosti*, the problems of life right from birth to death have been discussed, but nowhere bitterness comes to the forefront. The reason for such a phenomenon is that persons involved in the dialogue have neither greed for positions, nor are they internally hollow. They are the contented personalities with their respective ways of life. In the words of Bhai Gurdas in his first *var*, Guru Nanak considers the *siddhas* much more full of will power and capacity, and perhaps that is why the Guru is said to have told them that if the *siddhas*-like people would remain hidden in the caves of the mountains then who would lead the people in the world below – *Sidh chhapi baithe parbati kaunu jagati kau par utara?* If the dialogue is initiated with the intention of giving proper recognition to the other person, the results of such a dialogue would be meaningful and constructive. Sikhism has this tradition and may God bless the Sikhs to learn something from their history and

philosophy as enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib.

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9. Guru Granth Sahib, p 1113.
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11. Guru Granth Sahib, p 917.
12. Guru Granth Sahib, p 765-66.
13. Guru Granth Sahib, pp 1375-76.
14. *Bhai Gurdas Varan*, 1.40
15. Guru Granth Sahib, p 938.

□

*A pilgrimage to Benares
And ablution in the Ganges is to me,
The singing of God's praises,
In which my soul may bathe constantly.
For, true bathing consists in
The constant cherishing of one's love For God.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 358

ਗੰਗ ਬਨਾਰਸਿ ਸਿੰਫਤਿ ਤੁਮਾਰੀ ਨਵੈ ਆਤਮ ਰਾਉ ॥
ਸਚਾ ਨਾਵਨੁ ਤਾਂ ਥੀਐ ਜਾਂ ਅਹਿਨਿਸਿ ਲਾਗੈ ਭਾਉ ॥

GURU NANAK'S CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS HUMAN PEACE AND PROSPERITY

HARNAM SINGH SHAN*

Guru Nanak, as is well known, was a highly enlightened, dedicated, benevolent and universal Teacher of mankind. His life-long endeavour, noble exhortations and all-embracing teachings contributed much, therefore, to the thought and activity, peace and prosperity of humanity. Says Puran Singh, the blessed bard of the Land of Five Rivers:

Nanak, the Master, sowed the seed of Nam in the hearts of men;
And the fields are ripe with the golden corn.

The harvests shall come, and the harvests shall pass;
But the seed is of God and is growing.

He gave Angad his own love,
his own face and name and soul.¹

He gave him his own throne in the hearts of men.

He called him "Born of my loins".

and made another Nanak on this earth.

This is Nanak, the Master, the spirit of God.

That fashions Himself for ever in the image of man.

The harvests shall come,
and the harvests shall pass;

But the seed is of God and is growing.²

The divine seed and status which the Master bestowed upon his chosen disciple, Lehna, renamed Angad,³ flourished during the apostleship of his subsequent eight spiritual successors through whom God continued to speak. They also called themselves 'Nanak'⁴, took up his torch and disseminated his message, strengthened his mission.

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and consolidated his community which grew, in due course, into a new, distinct, revealed and complete religion, called Sikhism. "The harvest which ripened", tells Narang, "in the time of Guru Gobind Singh had been sown by Guru Nanak and nurtured by his successors. The sword which carved the Khalsa's way to glory was, undoubtedly, forged by Gobind (Singh); but the steel had been provided by Guru Nanak."⁵

Besides, "the combination of piety and practical activity which Guru Nanak manifested in his own life, he bequeathed to his followers, and it remains characteristic of many who own him as Guru today. At its best, it is a piety devoid of superstition and a practical activity compounded with determination and an immense generosity. "It explains much," adds McLeod, "that has happened in the Punjab during the last four centuries and it explains much that can be witnessed there today."⁶

2

Hence, the life, work and teachings of such a great Man and Master who, in the words of Cust, "by his actions and precepts has influenced the ideas and conscience of a large number of his fellow-creatures,"⁷ both during his life-time and for centuries after his death, can never be devoid of interest. When that influence has not been owing to his wealth, rank or power, but simply to his own merits, that Man must be called truly Great; and, when we find that his motives were unselfish, that after a long life devoted to the instruction of others in the paths of virtue and moral purity, he died poor, delegated his office not to his children but to one of his disciples, whom he considered most virtuous, that Man must be considered truly Good, as well as truly Great."⁸

Only a truly Good and great man could have begged from God, the Creator, such things to sustain himself, such powers to serve his fellow-creatures and such virtues to dwell upon His praise, as we find enumerated in his following appeal – an appeal the like of which we have yet to find elsewhere:

I beg from You, my Lord !

The alms of continence and truth as rice, compassion as wheat;

Good deeds as milk, content as butter;

*And attainment of Your grace
 As the receiving of charity in a leafy bowl.
 Pray let the calf of my mind suck in poise the milk of the milch-cow
 Of forgiveness and forbearance.
 Please bless me with the cloth of Your praise and modesty.
 So that I may ever dwell upon Your merits.⁹*

The tenets and teachings of such a Man and Master met with the challenges not only from the moral and religious degradation of the natives but also from that of the political and cultural onslaughts of the aliens. They faced not only the situation that confronted his own age but also set a pattern for meeting with the same under such situations in times to come.

3

Guru Nanak's message, in fact, revolutionized human thinking and enthused a new spirit in human activity. It made the people conscious of their situation and position, duty and responsibility by exhorting them in inspiring and invigorating verses such as the following:

*Let us deck ourselves with the silks of merits
 And adopt our arena (i.e., the field of duty),
 Sticking to our ideal steadfastly.¹⁰*

He made them fearless by telling them, so clearly and authoritatively:

*He who is immersed in the fear of God,
 Becomes fearless.¹¹*

Reiterating his firm belief in the equality of all human beings and conceding their fundamental right to be free from all sorts of fear, oppression and tyranny, the teacher in Nanak assured them that —

*By lodging the fear of God in the mind.
 All other fears (of the world) as also of the Yama are vanished from it.
 So, what fear is left to frighten us any more?...
 To be possessed of any fear other than God's, is vain;
 For, all other fears are only perturbation of mind.¹²*

Addressing the seekers of the path thus shown by him, the Master told them frankly and unambiguously that —

If you are keen to play the game of love,

*Step into my street with your head placed on your palm.
Having set your foot upon it,
Lay down your head without fear or grudge.*¹³

Guru Nanak, thus, freed human kind from all sorts of fears and fetters, mental as well as physical, social as well as political. He liberated them from the age-old shackles of mythology, ritualism, casteism, spirits, superstitions and the like, to such an extent that the holy compiler of his sacred writings in Guru Granth Sahib observed a little later that –

*The egg-shell of doubts has shattered, and the mind is illuminated.
The master has cut off the fetters from our feet
And has thus freed us from the bonds.*¹⁴

“Thus Guru Nanak extricated his followers”, held Cunningham in 1849 after actively participating in the Anglo-Sikh wars, “from the accumulated errors of ages, and enjoined upon them erect and free, unbiased in mind and unfettered by rules, to become an increasing body of truthful worshippers.”¹⁵ This is what the learned amanuensis, Bhai Gurdas Bhalla, also affirmed then in his own inimitable style:

*On the appearance of the True Guru Nanak,
The mist vanished
And light shone forth over the world.*¹⁶

And this was what actually happened about five hundred years ago. “His revolutionary message threw into relief the universal truths of higher religion and the errors of misguided doctrines. He strengthened the national conscience by turning it once more towards buoyant realism. He roused the people to a sense of dignity of man as the creative genius behind world history and as builder of human destiny, culture and civilization.”¹⁷ He told people rather in challenging terms:

*There is no joy or point, in just coming and going
If one comes into the world and passes out
Without accomplishing anything good and beneficial.*¹⁸

He roused their feeling of human responsibility for resisting evil and aggression, for defending their own honour and safeguarding the right and respect of others. He told them in very clear words that one who compromises with one's self-respect, is not worth even the salt

that one eats:

*If one lives without self-respect,
All that one eats goes to waste.*¹⁹

He, therefore, exhorted them to remain for ever alert and wide-awake, always up-and-doing for safeguarding their rights, aspirations and convictions.

Guru Nanak himself protested vehemently against the invasion by the foreign forces²⁰ and the onslaught of the alien culture²¹:

*In this distressful Kali age,
The Shariat Law (of the Muslims) is operative;
And the Qazi (the Muslim Judge) is exalted as Krishan
(i.e., a Hindu deity).*²²

Condemning the incursion in 1526 AD of Babar, the first Mughal emperor of India, he stated in very bold and forceful verses:

*Babar has rushed from Kabul with the wedding-party of sins;
And demands forcibly the possession of our motherland.
Modesty and righteousness have gone into hiding and;
Falsabood is strutting about the sham glory.*²³

Commenting, similarly, on the demoralizing effects of such barbarous invasions and the socio-religio-cultural onslaughts that followed, he observed in his usual bold and straight forward manner:

Quran and other Mohammodan scriptures have become the Approved Books.

*The Brahmins, the Vedas and other Hindus scriptures
Are not being given due respect.*

*The Name of God has also been changed into Rehman...*²⁴

Guru Nanak felt so strongly about all that, that he himself took up the challenge of the time and succeeded in evoking socio-cultural awareness and effective response to meet the terrible situation. According to Gokal Chand Narang, "after centuries of subjection, (he) was the first among the Hindus (to arouse such a feeling and also) to raise his voice against tyranny and oppression".²⁵ Assessing such a historic role and unique contribution, Anil Chandra Banerjee also rightly claims that "Guru Nanak resembled other medieval reformers in revitalizing religion and morality; but he was alone in creating a distinct and self-conscious socio-religious community which was destined to

play a fruitful and glorious role in his country's history."²⁶

But that too is not all. The grandeur of the Guru's personality, farsightedness of his vision, strength of his spirit, vastness of his knowledge, intensity of his experience, piety of his life, purity of his actions, beauty of his hymns and universality of his teachings ushered in and organized, in the course of time, a new, conspicuous, most modern and 'ever-green' religion – the religion of love, light, service and social justice – in the world. He created a distinct notion and a new human order which played a distinguished and historic role in the past and has a still more prominent role to play in the future. Says Arnold Toynbee, the great historian of our times, "If human race survives its follies at all... Sikhs (i.e., the followers of Guru Nanak) shall surely be there on this planet as a vigorous, hardy and go-getting *Homo sapiens*."²⁷ The history of Sikhism and the prophesy of Toynbee go a long way to prove the fulfillment of the lofty wish once cherished by Harrison in 1908 in the following words: "We need a reformed education resting on a scientific philosophy, revised and purified domestic manners, a new series of social institutions, a reformed and new commonwealth. But, above all, we need a reformed religion – social in its origin, in its object and in its methods, human, practical and scientifically true."²⁸

It was, in fact, Guru Nanak and his enlightened teaching that gave rise to such a modern, universal and non-sectarian religion, five centuries ago, which is 'social in its origin, in its object and in its methods'; which is 'human, practical and scientifically true'; and has generally been called the 'house-holders' religion and even an enlightened humanism. It was again Guru Nanak, the Divine Master, who vigorously pleaded that a householder was in no way less qualified and acceptable to God than a hermit; and that temporal and secular activity did not stand in the way of spiritual pursuit and salvation. Mentioning the distinguishing quality of the True Teachers, he, therefore, held:

*Contemplation of the True Lord brings that illumination
Which enables one to remain unattached in the midst of worldly pleasures.
Such is the distinctive greatness of the True Master
That through his grace and guidance,*

*One can attain salvation even while living with one's wife and children.²⁹
(i.e., while leading a normal domestic life)*

This clearly counters the observation of W H McLeod that Guru Nanak "stands firmly within the *Nirguna Sampradaya*, the so-called Sant Tradition of Northern India"; and that he did not originate any "school of thought" and hence cannot be considered the "founder" of a new religion, called "The Sikh Religion".³⁰ McLeod seems to have conveniently overlooked the fact that in several material aspects, the doctrine propounded by Guru Nanak not only goes far beyond what the Saints of the said tradition professed, but also runs counter to certain basic tenets of the Nath as well as the Vaishnava traditions, which, as McLeod himself says, constituted the basis of the Saint Tradition. Without entering into details at this stage, it may safely be pointed out again that Guru Nanak alone laid considerable emphasis on man's truthful conduct and beneficial actions, his basic duties and obligations towards his fellow-beings and the society at large. He was the one who repeatedly emphasized the part a man or woman has to play as a householder and not merely as a recluse preparing himself or herself for the next world while escaping his/her obligations towards his/her family and fellow-beings. As a matter of fact, Guru Nanak was absolutely against asceticism. He did not consider the world as unreal but observed, on the other hand, that –

This world is the abode of the True Lord.

The True Lord Himself abides in it.³¹

And also that –

*One should keep on communicating with one's fellow-beings,
So long as one lives in this world.³²*

It was he alone who maintained "worldly life, without being informed by the force of spirituality, is barren; and spiritual life without its expression in the world, is just sterile."³³

This was certainly a very bold step, quite contrary to what his predecessors and other religious teachers of the time had ever thought of. Time and again, he emphasized that God was not only in heaven but was very much present on the earth itself, prevalent in Nature and enshrined in the very heart of every human being. According to him –

God created Nature and pervades it.³⁴

God is hidden in every heart; and every heart is illumined by Him.³⁵

God is not far off.

*He is here as your own essence.*³⁶

A careful and unbiased comparison of the doctrine of the Saint Tradition to that of Guru Nanak, taken in its totality, at once brings out the original, distinct and far-reaching contribution that Guru Nanak made to the religious thought of the world. It was this new and revolutionary school of thought that, in due course, impelled his followers to play an important part in the history of India, culminating in the glorious achievement of his tenth successor, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), by instilling an indomitable spirit in the hearts of the downtrodden and helpless Indians to free themselves of the cruelties of their oppressive rulers and horrors of the foreign invasions. Hence, said Dorothy Field, sixty years earlier than McLeod, that the religion founded by Guru Nanak is not only 'a distinct world religion' but 'is also one which should appeal to the occidental mind. It is essentially a practical religion. If judged from the pragamatical stand-point, it would rank almost first in the world. Of no other religion can it be said that it has made a nation in so short a time. The Sikh Religion is one of the most interesting at present existing in India, possibly indeed in the whole world. That it should have transformed the outcaste Indian into a fine and loyal warrior, is little short of a miracle.'³⁷ And that miracle came about just a century and a half after Guru Nanak, who, according to Bhai Gurdas, "had been made manifest for the welfare of all mankind,"³⁸

And who struck his coin in the world and instituted this Nirmal (Pure) Panth".³⁹

By instituting the Nirmal Panth, that is, the Panth of truth or the Sikh Way of Life, "What Guru Nanak sought to accomplish was a regeneration of the decadent Indian people through bringing them back to abiding spiritual and moral values – the worship of the Supreme Being who is Uncreated and eternal as against the primitivism and polytheism prevalent in the land; to mould the individual life on the principle of the search for emancipation which means spiritual and moral purity; and to bring about a just and equitable social system as against the crying injustice of caste inequalities and passive submission to the tyranny of various kinds from those in power. This spirit of

idealism was given by the Guru its ancient name of *Dharma*, whose pillars are *daya* (compassion, humanity), purity, humility, contentment, renunciation of worldly objectives and lures, and action in the way of God. Guru Nanak gave voice to the deep agony and suffering of the people and instructed them in the meanings of *Dharma* as pure and righteous conduct in the individual sphere and the wider context of human relations. To the dumb masses suffering from the tyranny of priest and feudal lords for millennia and then also religious persecution, he brought spiritual light, a sense of human dignity and the faith and courage to create a better world by sacrifice and suffering borne in the way of God. While to the Hindu, the Guru gave an enriched and purified vision of spirituality, to the Muslim, he taught the essence of morality and humanity, as against the bigoted and narrow teachings of the priests of his faith. This vision of people permeated with the spirit of tolerance and brotherliness, and putting away the hatred born of creeds, was a unique nation-building effort in an age of manifold fragmentation of those who inhabited our land."⁴⁰ In the words of R C Majumdar, Guru Nanak's "was the first and also the last successful attempt to bring together the Hindus and Muslims in a common fold of spiritual and social brotherhood."⁴¹ Hence said Toynbee, paying him and the religion founded by him a glowing tribute for this glorious achievement, "The Sikh religion might be described, not inaccurately, as a vision of this Hindu-Muslim common ground. To have discovered and embraced the deep harmony underlying the historic Hindu-Muslim discord has been a noble spiritual triumph, the Sikhs may well be proud of their religion's ethos and origin."⁴²

6

There is nothing hyperbolic or flattering, therefore, in what Kurt Leidecker said in 1961, while addressing the Sikhs of America on the occasion of their founder's birth anniversary, "It is my belief that only India could have produced the Sikh and only Bharata could have given birth to Guru Nanak. What other country provided conditions such as permitted this great leader to be what he was and the Sikh community to practise what they believed? Could the West have played host to either?"

Let us scan the cultural and political history of Europe and the

time of the revered Guru Nanak. This is, let us briefly survey the Europe of the period AD 1469 to 1539. We can leave America out of this for the moment because it was only being discovered in 1492... India's history, likewise, was edging forward from crisis to crisis owing to greedy hands stretching out towards her riches. But one of the brightest spots in that age, which gave us a Kabir, was doubtless the birth of Guru Nanak at Nankana Sahib in the Punjab... Europe may have painted well, printed well, translated well, sailed the seas well, and conquered and colonized well, but it was Guru Nanak who dreamed of universal brotherhood and sang his song of unity of all faiths to the accompaniment of his minstrel Mardana. His garments, too, betrayed his universal outlook as A Christina Albers put it in verse:

But why that motley dress the Master weareth,
Half of the Hindu, half of Muslim Type?
It was to show that he was both or neither.
The Truth Eternal does not rest on dress.

No Goan adventure was needed to introduce into India the concept of the Fatherhood of God. "*Ek Pita ekas ke hum barik, tu mera gurbai*"²⁴³, i.e., 'there is only one Father of us all, and we are all His children', said the great Guru and proclaimed it far and wide till it became the basic principle guiding your conduct to this day and wherever you are in your homeland, in Singapore, Hong Kong or in America... That is not only your stand; that you recognize as your obligation. At it is well in a world in which all values, even primary ones, are being assailed."

Regarding Guru Nanak's emphasis on the worth, liberty and dignity of man and woman, Leidecker observed, "Freedom-loving America also is glad that Guru Nanak and you, his followers, recognize the true value and worth of man not merely in the abolition of slavery and untouchability and in extolling the virtues of the good Samaritan, but in independence of thinking. The contribution of Sikhism to the elimination of caste so vigorously pursued by India today, can never be forgotten by your countrymen nor by the world. One saying by Guru Nanak to which hearts in East and West are surely attuned is that 'Nobody is without some worth. How can you call woman inferior when it is she who gives birth to great men?'"²⁴⁴ Each human being,

even the lowliest, has some worth, and you Sikhs have demonstrated that in innumerable instances in the past.”

Drawing their attention to the Divine Preceptor's views on the dignity of labour, altruistic attribute and democratic practices, he explained, “To earn one's livelihood honestly, said Guru Nanak, is the source of happiness, and the right way consists in practicing non-injury and sharing with others.⁴⁵ Democracy, thus, is natural to you Sikhs. Your wealthy eat with the poor, you wait on him who may work for you. In humility and chivalry you are demonstrating in your quiet way the finest characteristic of man. In the new world that is shaping, you, therefore, will be contributing the valuable ancient heritage of Guru Nanak. It would, thus, seem impossible that a Sikh grounded deeply in the spiritual nature of his creed, would not be an ardent defender of democracy and the values which a free world cherishes. With your battle-cry, Sat Sri Akal (ਸਤਿ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅਕਾਲ), you will never be found on the side of the godless. Our hope for a better future is made brighter by virtue of Guru Nanak, whose birth you have given me the privilege to celebrate with you.”

Referring also to the Master's stress on the qualities of fearlessness, selfless service and sacrifice, he concluded: “We in America often speak of freedom from fear, but expect that freedom to come to us without, from improvements in the social order of favourable economic conditions. The Sikh Gurus, inspired by and in the spirit of the first one, Guru Nanak, looked within for stamina, and have prompted you to do the utmost in heroic deeds of valour and even more heroic sufferings of martyrdom which are inscribed in gold on the glorious pages of India's history, from Guru Arjun's tortures to the massacre at Amritsar. “Death is the privilege of the brave, provided they die for a worthy cause.”⁴⁶ said Guru Nanak. Indeed, a country is well off that can boast of men who for the sake of their fellow-men, not necessarily their co-religionists or compatriots, will fight and lay down their lives because they espouse a worthy cause. As Guru Tegh Bahadur, or was it Guru Gobind Singh, said: *sir dadam, magar sir-e-khuda na dadam*,⁴⁷ i.e., ‘he gave his own head, yet did not relinquish what Khuda (i.e., God) entrusted him with.’ Hence, Rabindranath Tagore, in his *jana-gana-mana-adhinayak*, did not forget among those gathered round the throne of the Dispenser of India's destiny, you

Sikhs, Vijaya Guru Nanak."⁴⁸

Keeping all that and much more in view, Bradshaw has acclaimed the religion founded by Guru Nanak as "the Faith of the New Age" and has stated unambiguously: "Sikhism is a universal world religion with a message for all men... It is the summum bonum for the modern man. It completely supplants and fulfils all the former dispensations of the older religions... The other religions contain Truth, but Sikhism contains the complete Truth. The older faiths were good in their days; but that is now in the past, and we are living in the dispensation of Guru Nanak. Just as we appreciate the discoveries and convenience of the modern living and do not want to exchange our modern jet airliners, automobiles and electricity for the horse-drawn carriages and candles of the past, so do we not want to exchange the New Age Faith of Guru Nanak for any of the Old Age religions and their antiquated philosophies. The Sikh faith is the universal religion for the present space age. The Sikh religion is truly the answer to the problems of the modern man."⁴⁹

This is also so because this most modern world religion embodies the universal spirit of altruism, liberalism and tolerance to such an extent that its followers seek blessings for the peace, prosperity and welfare of everyone – irrespective of his caste, creed, colour, country or calling – in their daily personal as well as congregational prayer to God, concluding the same with the following couplet:

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮ ਚੜਦੀ ਕਲਾ, ਤੇਰੇ ਭਾਣੇ ਸਰਬਤ ਦਾ ਭਲਾ ..

Says Nanak:

May Your Name, Your glory, O God!

Be ever in ascendance!

*May the whole humanity be blessed with peace
and prosperity in Your will, by Your grace.⁵⁰*

There lies, in fact, the greatness and distinctiveness of Guru Nanak's contribution to human peace and prosperity, to the welfare of man and woman for all times to come.

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## THE SIKH REVOLUTION – WHO ARE ITS CREATORS ? –

SANGAT SINGH\*

I have just gone through Prof Gurnam Singh Mukatsar's *The Creators of the Sikh Movement : Sant-Satguru Namdev, Kabir, Trilochan, Ravi Das and Sain*, Bahujan Samaj Prakash, Mukatsar 2004, p 416). It is a voluminous work, divided into 16 chapters: it has no sheet of contents, indicates no chapter number, nor has any index. Above all, it is repetitive, verbose, and written with a particular slant.

As the title itself shows, author regards the five, what he regards as Hindus from backward classes, as 'Creators' of the Sikh movement. Even if, for the sake of supposition, one goes with the thesis that the Sikh movement started much earlier than Guru Nanak, how could one exclude other *Bhaktas* – 14 in all – whose hymns have been included in Guru Granth Sahib? And, the first of them, chronologically, comes Bhagat Sheikh Farid, a Muslim of high caste. Precisely, Sheikh Farid says, " Says Farid God is immanent in His creation, and the creation lives in parameters set by God; how can one call any one bad, when no one is without Him." <sup>1</sup> And, the hymns of Sheikh Farid, as also of Namdev and some others, are found only in Guru Granth Sahib. Sheikh Farid's followers are well spread over both in India and Pakistan, and are extremely grateful to the Sikh movement for preserving his hymns in Punjabi, as these are not found amongst his considerable literature in Persian language. Could not they also legitimately say that Farid was the precursor, pillar or the founder around whom the Sikh philosophy revolves?

How was Kabir a Hindu from a backward class? Basically, he was a Muslim, and according to his *Salokas* in Guru Granth Sahib he

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went to Mecca on Haj several times. Once, God met him there (or he had a vision), and told him that God lived only there? Later, he said (Guru Granth Sahib) that if Allah lived in one mosque (at Mecca) only, then what for the whole of world was? He also said that if performing circumcision made one a Muslim, what would you do to a women. Then, he said, it would be better to remain a Hindu (Guru Granth Sahib). He was very critical of Brahmins, and asked them if he was born of a Brahmin woman, why didn't he come through the other reproductive process (Guru Granth Sahib)? Though Kabir got his initiation at the hands of Ramanand unintentionally, Prof Gurnam Singh is reluctant to mention that, because Ramanand was a high class Hindu. Kabir on his own says, and Guru Arjun endorses him on that, (Guru Granth Sahib, p 1136) that he is neither a Hindu, nor a Musalman. His body was *summum-bonum* of Allah-Ram. The author is chary of mentioning that too.

## II

Before proceeding further, it will be of interest to dilate further on the author. Prof Gurnam Singh Mukatsar has been mentioned as National President of the Kaumi Bamsaif (ਕੌਮੀ ਬਮਸੇਫ) and All India Samaj Parivartan Manch (All India Association for Social Change). He has already published a number of works on Ravidas and Kanshi Ram, besides (1) *How Indian People Became Downtrodden*; (2) *Banaras Ke Thagg*; (3) *Ghulamgiri*; (4) *The Struggle is On, or I shall not Die a Hindu*, and other such works. It can be said that this work can be seen to represent the viewpoint of the downtrodden classes, or rather what is being fed to them by their intellectuals.

In another paper "Ki Sikh Hindu Hain, Ja(n) Nahin" (Are the Sikhs Hindus or Not) published in the journal *Begham Shehr* of March 2007 (p 17), the author speaks of the rise of the Sikh Dharma, whose basic philosophy, in his words, was laid down by four great men, namely, Sant-Satgur Bhagat Namdev, Sant Satgur Bhagat Kabir, Sant Satgur Bhagat Ravi Das and Guru Nanak, in that order.

It may be seen that firstly, the author drops the names of *Bhakta*, Trilochan and Sain (ਸੈਨ) from the status of 'creators' of the Sikh movement, accorded to them in the work of 2004. May be, because of a few of their hymns being found in Guru Granth Sahib, and nowhere

else. Secondly, he mentions Namdev, Kabir and Ravidas each as a Sant-Satgur" as well as a "Bhagat", besides Nanak whom he mentions as Guru, in that order.

But the question is what is his own conviction? Does he believe in all that his "Sant Satgurus" say, or does he have doubts in his mind about their credibility?

In the Sikh scriptures, a Bhagat is not the one who only worships God, but also a hero (ਸੂਰਮਾ) who also leads a social and political revolution. He quotes Kabir to say, ਭਗਤ ਕਰੇ ਕੋਈ ਸੂਰਮਾ, only a hero can do Bhakti. Again, he quotes Kabir (p.15) to say to a woman who is going to give birth to a child, should bear a Bhagat, philanthropist or a hero, otherwise why lose her luster.<sup>2</sup> Here, Kabir's first advice for a worldly mother is to give birth to a *Bhagat*. Kabir himself uses the terms guru and bhagat in the same sentence to make explicit what he wants to say, "Brahmin is the guru of worldly people, but not a guru of *bhagatas*".<sup>3</sup> Obviously, Gurnam Singh Mukatsar has either not applied his mind to the theme of his work, or he does not fully agree with Kabir, who prefers to call himself a Bhagat.

Guru Granth Sahib, uses synonyms of *bhagat*, *sadhu*, *sant*, *guru*. Kabir himself explicates, "To shave off the mother of that guru who does not remove the duality of mind."<sup>4</sup> Hindu terminology used the term guru with a great degree of depreciation for one who teaches the other about any of the musical instruments.

It would be interesting to look at the author's views on Bhagat Nam Dev of Maharashtra. The authority for his hymns is only Guru Granth Sahib. Bhagat Nam Dev, apart from his rendezvous with the Almighty, talks of two main incidents in his life. These are mentioned by the author himself a number of times.

Firstly, Nam Dev was insulted by Brahmins and made to get out of the temple, as he came from a low caste. Nam Dev sat on the back of the temple and started worshipping the name of the Lord. He also said that if after his death, even if he gets salvation, of what use that would be? And lo, the face of *Deora* or the temple started moving towards him: took a turn of 180 degrees, and Brahmins, to their surprise, got to the backside of it. (pp 56, 63)

This incident of turning to the reverse side of the face of the temple is accepted by Guru Ram Das who mentions about it in Guru

Granth Sahib twice, in Rag Asa and Rag Suhi, and also by Bhai Gurdas once in *Var* 10, stanza. (But see, how after mentioning it a number of times, the author seeks to deal with it as per his limited understanding.)

Nam Dev was born at Narsi Vamini in Satara District of Maharashtra, and this Brahmin temple, whose face he caused to be turned, is situated at nearby Pandarpur. Prof Gurnam Singh Mukatsar may himself go to Pandarpur to see the turned face of the *Deora*, which is still in existence! He has made similar remarks about Guru Nanak's turning the face of the mosque at Mecca. I would not venture into that, and also Guru Nanak's taking the young son of Pir Dastgir at Baghdad into the different world, or his leaving the imprint of his palm at the huge boulder at Hasan Abdal, now in Pakistan.

This brings us to the second incident in Nam Dev's life. Stung by Nam Dev's spiritual attainments, the Brahmins conspired, as per their crooked nature. The Ruler's cow somehow died. The Brahmins went in unison and told him that Nam Dev had the powers to revive the cow. And lo, Nam Dev was taken to the ruler. He was bounded hand and foot, and told to revive the cow in 8 *gharis*, or 24 hours. The author avers.

Nam Dev's description of the incident is given in Guru Granth Sahib, and need not be repeated here. After 7 *gharis*, the Lord riding on His vehicle made his presence felt to Nam Dev. He made him three offers: (1) If you like, I can make this land upside down, i.e., cause a revolution; (2) If you like, I can make this part of land fly high in the sky, (so that people get afraid as to what they are upto); and (3) If you like I can revive this dead cow. Nam Dev, for whatever reasons, chose the third option. The cow came to life, cried for its calf and immediately yielded milk for the Ruler. The *qazis* and *mullahs* paid their salutation to Nam Dev. But Nam Dev knew that if tomorrow someone from the ruler's family, or someone else near or dear to him, dies, he would be required to repeat his performance or face the consequences. He therefore, ran away from Maharashtra and came down to settle himself at village Ghuman, near Gurdaspur in Punjab.

What was the impact of Nam Dev's achievements in Maharashtra? Obviously, Nil. Kabir too in his times faced political oppression, but did not react violently, and chose to put up with it.

I wrote in the third chapter of my work *The Sikhs in History* that

till Bhai Mani Singh's martyrdom, it was ingrained in the Sikhs to lead their lives as per the hymns of the Sikh Gurus, but pay equal reverence to the Bhagat Bani. This got mixed up after that. What Bhagat Nam Dev and certain other Bhaktas did was not in accordance with the Sikh principles. For instance, Guru Hargobind's 9-year old son Baba Atal was one evening playing with his mate a game that was to be resumed next morning and completed. Baba Atal went to his house next morning, and was told that his age-mate had died last night. Not caring for that, Baba Atal called for his mate, who got up and accompanied him to the game. Shortly afterwards, Guru Hargobind scolded his son saying that some children die during child-birth, others after that or in their teens, some in their youth and so on. It was not for them to intervene in God's scheme of things. Baba Atal understood that. He took a sheet of cloth, put it over his body and expired near Harmandir, where now a 9-storey Gurudwara named after him stands.

### III

At places, Prof Gurnam Singh Mukatsar makes very sweeping statements and gives the impression that he lacks in basic understanding of not only Sikhism, but also of the so-called backward class Bhaktas. He, throughout his repetitive work, does not mention even once about the revelation Guru Nanak had in 1499, at the age of 30, when he started on an extensive tour which took him, unlike any holy man earlier, to various parts of India and abroad. It was during this revelation that Guru Nanak was led to the court of God, lasting over three days, when he had a broad vision of God's sovereignty, creation and expanse. This revelation was more fuller than the one Lord Buddha had 2000 years earlier.<sup>5</sup>

Guru Nanak after his revelation (as per Guru Granth Sahib) spoke of countless, or hundreds of thousands of regions, constellations like our own which had countless Suns and Moons. Later, Guru Arjun the fifth Nanak (in *Salok* Sanskriti, Guru Granth Sahib) speaks of our Solar system's getting older and getting a reduction in its sphere when a time may come that God may fold up his creation. This aspect of the Sikh Guru's revelation has now in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries been confirmed by the American and European Scientists who have been, and are, finding new constellations. Only on June 1, 2007, they came

across a Sun in outer constellation, 100 times more powerful than our Sun. The point is, that the revelations of Guru Nanak and his successors were more authentic and credible, as against other Prophets' vision or their rendezvous with God. It was immediately after that, that Guru Nanak sought to sum up the personality of God in 14 monosyllables in his Invocation or *Mul Mantra*,<sup>6</sup> which provides the quintessence of his philosophy.

Throughout his journeys afterwards, Guru Nanak makes no mention of *Vedas*, *Shastras*, *Smritis*, *Puranas*, or any other body of literature for what he was saying. He also makes no mention of all the Bhaktas whose hymns, because of identity of their outlook, he collected from various parts of India and abroad, and jotted them down in his *Vehi*.<sup>7</sup> Gurnam Singh's contention that the Sikh Gurus confined themselves within the vocabulary used by the so-called five backward class Bhagats is untenable and a statement of a mind which is unable to fathom either the depth of the Sikh scripture or even of the given Bhaktas. Guru Nanak's hymns are so compact, so abbreviated that these are impregnated with a philosophical content. He has given new meanings to a given word. I would be hesitant to go into that depth here, or go into the *Bhaktas'* words for comparative purposes. I regard all these Bhaktas *jivan mukats*, a status beyond the reach of ordinary human beings.

It was Guru Nanak's humility and that of his successors, that the name of various Gurus was not mentioned in Guru Granth Sahib, though from the script, *Mahla* 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 9, it was clear to which Guru the particular hymn relates. The names of various *Bhaktas* – Muslims or non-Muslims, Brahmins or others including the so-called backward castes, or outcastes – were mentioned with all the reverence, as all these persons who figured therein, were, as stated earlier, *jeevan mukats*, liberated while still alive.<sup>8</sup> This term *jeevan mukta* is not used by Prof Gurnam Singh because of his own limitations. Guru Nanak had enunciated a philosophy of universal humanism irrespective of caste, creed, sex, one's place in life, etc. Now, look at the author's mature assertion (p 299) that it was ordained by the Guru (which? when? and where?) that only the names of 'basic creators' of the movement (and he thinks of only 5 backward class 'Hindus' as basic creators) was to be registered. Though Guru Granth Sahib mentions

6 Gurus, 14 Bhaktas, 14 bards and four others, what makes him think that only the so-called five people from backward classes were 'basic creators'. Unless one takes out this sectarian class-consciousness from one's brain, no composite growth is possible in Sikhism. This applies to all sections of society, be they Khattris, Aroras, Jats, Ramgarhias, Mazhbis, or others. I have already mentioned till Bhai Mani Singh all classes of Sikhs paid full obeisance to Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

These Bhaktas were like springs of fresh and healthy water, some small, others medium or big. Some springs functioned for some time, others for a greater time. I have shown that Nam Dev had to migrate from Maharashtra to Punjab, while the followers of Kabir, who was most vocal critic of Brahminism at Benaras then, was forced by Brahmins to fall within Brahminical framework afterwards, though they could not extinguish the flame. It was the Sikh movement under Guru Nanak, which had introduced the principles of martyrdom in his followers, which flowed like a torrent and caused a dent in Brahminical thinking, though it earned the latter's utmost hostility. Guru Hargobind and later Guru Gobind Singh, while manifesting the Khalsa, decided to instil in his followers, coming from lower section of society, a spiritual, social and political revolution. This produced within them the spirit to rule and produce a ruling class.<sup>9</sup>

In the confederacy of 11 Misls in 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Sikhs from backward classes or Mazhbis were the flag bearers of the Dal Khalsa. They established their rule in Naraingarh area of Ambala Distt. During early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the English extended their protective umbrella over Phulkian states of Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Faridkot, etc., and also to Kalals or (Ahluwalias) of Kapurthala, the English refused a similar status to the Mazhbis of Naraingarh, who in their perverse view, had only established their Zamindari over the area and could not be equated with the rulers. There was an upward social mobility amongst various classes, to wit Jats, Kalals (wine distillers) or Ahluwalias, Thokas, Ramgarhias and that branch of Sansis to whom belonged Ranjit Singh and his collaterals. All other Sansis till 1947 were classified as a Criminal Tribe and treated as such by the British. The Mazhbis also lost in the bargain for their failure to establish a state/rule. They, however, were a fighting force in Ranjit Singh's army, and were raised as such in the English army: the Mazhbis or the Sikh Light Infantry (SLI) won laurels

during the British rule, and their position after decolonisation in 1947 was quite on the top as a fighting force. The SLI was deliberately got badly mauled by Rajiv government in 1987 when it was the first regiment sent to Sri Lanka against the LTTE, withdrawn and resent, to be the last to come out. The government of India was feeling nervous at the existence of such a compact force following its onslaught of Operation Blue Star in 1984.

The historians of medieval history, some aligned to Brahminism, others themselves being of a Brahminical orientation, treated all these springwells of revolt against Brahminism, as a reform movement and not a revolutionary movement. The Bhaktas, except like Mira Bai, who is unnecessarily drawn in by Prof Gurnam Singh, repudiated Hinduism, while Mira Bai's followers fell in the other category. The fault lies with the backward classes themselves who, for lack of consciousness, failed to distinguish between their friends and foes. The backward classes failed to assert their position. It also happened in 20<sup>th</sup> century when the British announced their Communal Award in 1932, giving appropriate representation to the Muslims, the Backward Classes, and the Sikhs, and others. Brahmins and Brahminical Hindus, the most crooked class, was reduced to inanity. It was here that backward class leaders like Dr B R Ambedkar failed, and failed miserably. He not only fell into the trap of M K Gandhi, the most scheming mind of all Hindus, but also knowingly failed to take any lead. He had clearly enunciated that the deliverance of backward classes lies in their getting out of the Hindu fold. Gandhi did not, mischievously, object to his going in for Christianity or Islam (both outside the Indian culture), but was dead set against his joining Sikhism, which fell within the Indian culture. His entering into Poona Pact of 1933 was an act of humiliation, and one of betrayal. The British, too, knowing that M K Gandhi was their plant in the Indian movement, obliged. They issued a proclamation that untouchables were Hindus and would get special concessions, only if they remained within the Hindu fold, and not otherwise. Gandhi ensured that depressed classes remain depressed for all times to come; he emerged as father figure of modern Hinduism, with inbuilt inequalities.

Ambedkar unfortunately formed part of the deal. Later, his assumption of Ministership in Nehru administration in 1946, and acting



as a Law Minister to push through the Hindu-Constitution in 1949, sealed the fate of minorities and of the backward classes. Ambedkar pushed through the Constitution, Article 25.2(b) mentioning Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs as falling within the Hindu parameters. Ambedkar did not move out till he was ousted, like another camp follower, Baldev Singh, in 1952. He later chose to adopt Buddhism, despite article 25.2(b) above, which he could have chosen in 1932-33, before falling a prey to the Poona Pact. His brain befuddled at that moment, now the Brahmins, thanks to him, had scuttled Indian Buddhism to fall within the Hindu framework, with Brahmins playing a controlling role over Buddhist shrines in India. The sufferings of backward classes, of which they are the victims, is the consequence of the false moves or lack of them by their own leaders. Kanshi Ram, a schedule caste Sikh and convert to Buddhism, tried to set right the position in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But now, in 2007, the success of Mayawati, in U P with the help of Brahmin infiltrators sets in place the importance of scheduled caste or backward class captive vote as a plaything for her, seeking political power leading to a control over the centre.

The Sikh Revolution or the Sikh Movement flowed like a flood in Punjab and might have yielded positive results, but for the Brahminical infiltrators and for failure of leadership. Prof Gurnam Singh's contention that the backward classes in Sikhism had their sway till the end of Banda Singh Bahadur is a misreading of the Sikh history. The writings of Qazi Noor Mohammad, who fought against the Sikhs in 1764, tend to show the egalitarian character of the Sikh movement till at least 1765, and again in 1920s. The defeat of Sikhism in 1845 and again in 1849 was a great victory for Chanakyaniti of *Sam*, (equality) *dam* (concession) *dand* (reprisals) and *bhed* (dissentions) by Brahminical and Dogra forces, actuated by *putr-moh* (love for dynasty) of Ranjit Singh who showed a miserable lack of understanding of the Sikh ethos. Now again, Sikhism is pulsating in an uneasy state. The hope that the Sikh masses could look towards their downtrodden brethren lies dashed because of lack of vision and direction to the backward classes, their sense of history; their place in Bahujan Samaj is ill-digested and lies athwart.

There is all-round failure of leadership of backward classes —

scheduled castes and scheduled tribes – who constitute about 28 percent of Indian population. Their leadership, whether within the government or outside, whether ruling or amidst the opposition, is incapable, thoughtless and incompetent. They have got reservation in services, including the creamy layer. There is a vast opportunity available for the entry of SCs and STs in one of the biggest employers – the Armed Forces. Since the British did not give them any representation, the caste Hindu who controls the levers of power in India does not favour that, or has not opened up the avenues to the backward members of the society. If such scheduled castes, the Mazhis, representing the Sikh Light Infantry were one of the best fighting forces in British India, who have shown their mettle in 1947-48, 1962, 1965 or 1971 wars, why can not a SC or ST from Hindu sector? If Hindu SC or ST is not considered a suitable material let him be subjected to Sikh initiation. Herein lies the importance of Bahujan Samaj, which itself needs a new feedback, a new direction and a different orientation. One remembers Dr Ambedkar's words that for their salvation, the backward classes need to come out of the Hindu fold. With due apologies, Buddhism has not risen upto the mark, or is not considered appropriate.

Herein lies the opportunity for the Bahujan Samaj, especially in Punjab, to give a wake up call to reorient itself into a meaningful future. Will they?

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2. This hymn does not find place in Guru Granth Sahib. Some people attribute it to Kabir, others to Surdas.
- 3 ਬਾਹਮਨ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਜਗਤ ਕਾ, ਭਗਤਨ ਕਾ ਗੁਰ ਨਾਹਿ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p.180
- 4 ਮਾਇ ਮੂੰਡਉ ਤਿਸ ਗੁਰੂ ਕੀ ਜਾ ਤੇ ਭਰਮ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p. 17
- 5 Lord Buddha makes no mention of God; and Guru Nanak makes no mention of Lord Buddha, though they had identity of outlook in social philosophy. Guru Nanak, however, makes critical

references of Jain practices and condemns them severely.

6. The Mul Mantra has been translated elsewhere by the author as follows: The Only Infinite One (1), the Only Supreme Being — God (*oankar*) the Eternal (*sati*), the Universal Spirit (*namu*), the Creator (*karta*), the All-Pervading (*Purakh*), the Sovereign (*nirbhau*), the Harmonious (*nirvairu*), the Immortal (*akala*), the Embodiment (*murti*), the Un-incarnated (*ajuni*), the Self-existent (*Saibhan*), the Enlightener (*guru*), the Bountiful (*prasad*)!
7. Guru Nanak was son of a Patwari and it was common practice with that class to maintain a number of Vehis of various sizes — very big, big, intermediary and small. My family also had four vehis recording various social and cultural matters.
8. I may mention that pen name of Nanak is used as the author of all the compositions of all the six Gurus and of Bhai Mardana whose compositions find place in SGGS. Some of the Gurus have paid special tributes to Guru Nanak for his higher attainments. Bhatts in their panegyrics have mentioned of the Ist five Gurus as well. The name of Guru Gobind comes only once in the last Salokas of the ninth Guru when just before his decimation, he says that 'the name of Lord remains, that of His saints remains, and also of Guru Gobind' — nominated now to lead the Sikh movement.
9. ਜਦੋਂ ਤੂੰ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਨ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ ! ਸਿਰ ਧਰ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ । ਇਤ ਮਾਰਗ ਪੈਰ ਧਰੀਜੈ ਸਿਰ ਦੀਜੈ ਕਾਣ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ [If you want to play the game of love, come my way, when you tread this path, lay down your head, without murmur. (guru nwnk, SGGS p. 1412.)
10. ਜਿਨ ਕੋਂ ਜਾਤ ਜਨਮ ਕੁਲ ਆਹੀ । ਸਰਦਾਰੀ ਨ ਭਈ ਕਿਦਾਹੀ । ਇਨਹੀ ਕੋ ਸਰਦਾਰ ਬਣਾਉ । ਰਾਜ ਕਰਨ ਕੀ ਰੀਤ ਸਿਖਾਉ । (ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ). In whose caste, family tree, no one became a leader of men. I would make them leaders and teach them the process of rule.

THE SIKH IDEOLOGY*

JAGJIT SINGH

What the Radical Bhaktas could not do, the Sikh Gurus did. They created an egalitarian society (Sikh Panth) outside the caste society and made it the spring-board for giving shape to a revolutionary movement. But, before we come to discuss these developments, it is necessary to understand the Gurus' view of life, because it is not possible to appreciate the significance of the Sikh movement without understanding the Sikh thesis highly integrated in its conception. In fact, it is so radical, new and creative in character that it has led to many misunderstandings about its world-view. Another factor that has caused a lot of misconception about it is the background in which Sikhism appeared. Brahminism being a medley variety of creeds and cults, embracing even conflicting and contradictory systems, there is a lazy tendency to regard Sikhism as an off-shoot of the orthodox cultural complex. But, the growth of Sikhism in India is so exceptional that there is hardly a common essential between Sikhism and the traditional Indian religions. For this reason, it is necessary for us to give a brief outline of the main traditional socio-religious trends, and the corresponding Sikh approach.

THE TRADITIONAL BACKGROUND AND APPROACH

The course of all religious, social and political evolution, up to the time of the Gurus, had been steered, or greatly influenced, by three dominant factors. The first was the overriding social and political consideration of preserving the Varna Ashrama Dharma; the second was the individualistic and quietist approach of life; and the third was the doctrine of *Ahimsa*. No social or political movement, which went against the fundamentals of the caste ideology, could arise out of the

* Courtesy : *The Sikh Revolution* by Jagjit Singh

orthodox creeds, because that would negate Orthodoxy. The Buddhists and the Radical Bhaktas were not bound down to the caste ideology, but both shared, in varying degrees, the quietist approach to life. M. Hiriyana writes, "These are the two elements common to all Indian thought — the pursuit of *Moksha* as the final ideal and the ascetic spirit of the discipline recommended for its achievement."¹ Both these elements implied a negative view of life. The dominant refrain of the Indian religions was that the world was unreal or a place of suffering. Life was a bondage from which release had to be obtained by cutting oneself away, as far as possible, from the world of activity and resorting to meditational or ascetic practices. From the sociological point of view, this approach to life was pessimistic, individualistic and anti-social. Pessimism was such a prominent feature that the Greeks noted that 'Death is with them (Brahmins) a very frequent subject of discourse.'^{1a} In the case of the orthodox schools, this view of life was further compounded by the paramount consideration of preserving the caste order. Lord Krishna is the only prominent Indian prophet who propounded the philosophy of *Karma* (activity) in the *Bhagavadgita*, but in the same text he is said to be the author of Varna Ashrama Dharma. Therefore, this *Karma*, in its application, meant nothing beyond the performance of ritualistic duties, as in the Vedic religion, or of the prescribed caste duties as advocated by the orthodoxy. All activity had strictly to be within the orbit of the caste structure.

Similarly, although Mahayana Buddhists took a prominent part in alleviating human suffering, they were inhibited from tackling political problems by their adherence to the doctrine of *Ahimsa* (non-violence) and by their regarding the world as a place of suffering. 'It is well known how Buddhism turned into peaceful nomads the Mongolian hordes, who in the 13th century devastated the whole of Iran, Western Asia, and south-eastern Europe.'^{1b} Buddhism eschewed the use of force for any purpose whatsoever, and gave the doctrine of *Ahimsa* a prominent place in its scheme of religious propaganda. In Jainism, the application of this principle covered even the smallest of living beings. Later on, Brahminism also partly accepted this approach. The cumulative result of all the three limiting factors was to help maintain the social status quo and entrench social reaction in the form of the caste order. All purposeful revolutionary movement towards human

liberty and equality was either discounted or barred.

THE SIKH WORLD-VIEW

The Sikh movement deliberately built up a society outside the caste society. It was also the only people's movement of Indian origin which strove to capture political power for humanistic ends and objectives. In the context of the Indian tradition referred to above, both these developments could not be fortuitous. A great conscious and sustained effort was needed to go against and overcome the hardened traditional trends and rigidly fixed social alignments. This needed a new and original ideology, a clear-cut direction, a committed organization and a determined leadership. Here, we shall briefly state the rationale of the Sikh thesis, which, in its logical execution, required of the Sikh movement a complete reversal of the traditional trends.

Before stating the Sikh view of life, we should like to make one point clear. Many of the misinterpretations of the Sikh thesis and the Sikh movement are, in no small measure, due to the Sikh Gurus having used old Indian religious idiom and terminology for the expression of their gospel. In the Indian tradition, all spheres of life, whether social, political or economic, had, in one form or the other, religious implication or connotation. Even ordinary rules of human behaviour and hygiene were conceived and expressed in religious idiom. In this back-ground, the urge for social and political change could properly be understood and appreciated by the people only through the language of religion. It is not at all suggested that the Sikh Gurus used religion as a mask to cover their social aims. For them, the tackling of all problems of life was an integral part of their religion itself. It has to be emphasised that, in Sikhism, the entire field of life was contemplated, covered and moulded by religious precepts. As such, social ideas and urges could not be an exception. For this purpose, the Gurus put their own meaning and content into the old Indian religious terminology. This fact is in itself a sufficient indication to show that the Gurus did not want their movement to remain confined to the traditional concept of the religious sphere of activity. It also indicates the direction in which they wanted their movement to move.

THE WORLD IS REAL.

The Sikh Gurus regard the world as real and meaningful. "True

is He, True is His creation."² "By despising the world, one gets not to God."³ "Deride not the world, it is the creation of God."⁴ This Sikh thesis made a major breakaway from the traditional Indian thought, which, including Buddhism, regarded the world with indifference or as a place of suffering, and made the attainment of release, salvation (*Moksa* or *Mukti*) or spiritual bliss the bell and end-all of all religious endeavour.

MOKSA

The world being real, object is not to secure a release from life, but to strive for a moral and spiritual living. God-centred activity, and not salvation is the goal. In the first place, the so-called *Mukti*, the idea of salvation from life, was not given the importance "He who is fond of God, what has he to do with *Mukti* or heaven."⁵ "*Mukti* techniques and many a comfort and felicity cannot equal love of God."⁶ Guru Gobind Singh changed the title of Nand Lal's composition from *Bandginama* (meditational path) to *Zindginame* (The way to live.)⁷ Secondly, the idea of *Mukti* was given a new content. It meant release from self-centredness, selfishness and individualism and not from the world. In fact, *Mukti* was linked to the service of humanity. "By service in the world alone one finds a place in God's Court."⁸

SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT

The second corollary of the world being real is that one should not shun life or run away from it. Full participation in life is advocated. Guru Nanak's first utterance after his enlightenment was, "There is no Hindu, no Mussalman,"⁹ "This is an announcement of supreme significance. It declared not only the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God, but also his clear and primary interest not in any metaphysical doctrine but only in man and his fate. In addition, it emphasised, simultaneously, the inalienable spirituo-moral combination of his message."¹⁰ "The kind-hearted Baba Nanak could not bear to see others in grief."¹¹ He told Shah Sharaf that those men who love their fellow beings come out successful in this world."¹²

In consequence of his ideology, one great practical step Guru Nanak took for the social involvement of his creed was to establish the primacy of the householder's life. It was such a big departure from the religious tradition that the Naths accused Guru Nanak of putting acid in the pure milk of religious life in order to spoil it."¹³ In his (Guru Nanak's) system, the householder's life became the primary

forum of religious activity. His was not a concession to the laity. In fact, the normal life became the medium of spiritual training and expression.¹⁴ The Gurus offered householder's life not only as an alternative, but made it of primary importance for the seeker. Guru Angad and Guru Amardas explicitly excluded the Udasis, who led a celibate and ascetic life, from the Sikh fold.¹⁵ The Sikh Gurus, excepting Guru Harkrishan who died at a tender age, were themselves married householders.

Another major practical step to wean people away from an ascetic's or a mendicant's life was the Guru's insistence on earning one's bread by honest work. "The man incapable of earning a living gets his ears split (to become a Yogi) or becomes a mendicant. He calls himself a guru or saint but begs for food from door to door. Never look upto such a person or touch his feet. He knows the right way who earns his living by hard work and shares his earning with others."¹⁶

THE UNITARY VIEW OF LIFE

The caste ideology compartmentalized not only the society, but also orthodox ethics and religion. To take a unitary view of life and reconcile it with the hierarchical, inequitable and exploitative caste system was impossible. As the preservation of the caste order was the supreme consideration, truly religious life was circumvented or avoided lest it should question the inhumanity of the caste system. Instead, all religious yearning was sidetracked into esoteric or other otherworldly fields. One course adopted was to let recluses, Naths, Yogis, mendicants, Sanyasis and the like cut themselves away from the society and pursue their ideals in isolation without disturbing the caste order. The second course followed was to divorce religion itself from worldly life, especially from political life. How strong a hold this narrow and irreligious view-point had on the Indian mind can be seen from the following excerpt from Rabindra Nath Tagore's writing: "The liberation which Baba Nanak realized in his heart was not political liberty, but spiritual freedom. Nanak had called upon his disciples to free themselves from selfishness, from narrow bigotry, and from spiritual lethargy. Guru Govind organized the Sikhs to suit a special purpose. He called in the human energy of the Sikhs from all other sides and made it flow in one particular channel only; they ceased to be full, free

men. He converted the spiritual unity of the Sikhs into a means of worldly success.¹⁷ It is really sad how successfully the traditional approach, under the cover of spiritual freedom and salvation, continues to make even sensitive minds indulge in the make-believe that spiritual freedom could be divorced from political liberty.

The Sikh view of religion is diametrically opposed to the traditional one given above. It does not permit of any dichotomy of life, or of any divorce of the individual from his society. Nor does it visualize that true religion and ethics can operate unconcerned beside an unjust social or political order; nor that spiritual freedom can co-exist with religious dictation and political slavery. The Sikh Gurus take a very comprehensive view of religion. Theirs is a unitary and integrated view of life. They do not look upon the individual as an entity detachable from society. As such the religious and spiritual problems of an individual cannot be divorced from the moral spiritual predicaments of the society as a whole. Personal salvation (*Mukti*), or remaining absorbed in spiritual bliss, is not the Sikh ideal. For, the striving for moral spiritual progress is not an end in itself; it is a preparation to equip oneself for the better service of humanity. In fact, service of one's fellow-beings is indispensable for one's moral and spiritual growth. The real love of God is its transformation into love for man. For God loves all men, the lowest and the down-trodden. According to the Sikh Gurus, religious, moral and spiritual activity covers the totality of life of the individual as well as of the society. For, life is one whole and cannot be arbitrarily split up into separate religious, social or political spheres. Nor can it be ignored or left to take care of itself. For them, religion has to meet all the problems and challenges thrown up by life. Each and every activity of man is either God-oriented or self-oriented, viz., it is either for the uplift of man and his society or it is destructive. There cannot be a neutral position. Inaction and sloth are sins.

As a consequence of their unitary view, the Sikh Gurus gave the Sikh movement a two-pronged direction. The first was an emphasis on changing the value-patterns of the individual and that of the society. This was to bring about, what has come to be called in modern parlance, a cultural revolution. The second line was to change the inequitable social, religious and political set-ups. Both these processes were of

one piece and for one overall purpose. They were complimentary to each other. None could be complete by itself. All social systems have to be run by men, and in the last analysis, their worth is determined by the character of the people who manage them. And, it is imperative that social, political and economic systems should be just, because these determine the development of the human personality.

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GOVT SHOULD INTERVENE TO STOP TURBAN FRISKING*

HIMMAT SINGH**

A very peculiar situation has arisen the world over for Sikhs with the recent enforcement of US Homeland Security Department rules giving full powers to screening officers at their airports in ordering a deliberate security check of turbaned Sikh passengers.

This would include a patting down of the turban with the use of the electronic detector, the touching and feeling of the turban for any suspicious objects, and in some cases a removal of the 'pugri' itself in a private enclosure and its examination for non-metallic threats including explosives.

In theory and now in practice, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Gen J J Singh the COAS, Sikh MPs, the SGPC Chief, Sikh dignitaries in Bureaucracy, Judiciary and Armed Forces, and certainly the common Sikh turbaned air passenger, are all in line for a possible removal and physical check of their turbans at American airports.

The matter has already been raised in the Rajya Sabha by Punjab MP Dr MS Gill with External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee, the Sikh watchdog organisations in America, and more recently by the SGPC Chief himself. But no one from the Central government has yet taken it up at the highest level with the Americans, busy as they are with the Left and the nuclear deal and other matters that are considered politically more profitable in their eyes.

The turbaned Sikh by now forms an integral part of the American social and political landscape and the question that needs to be posed is why, with an extremely popular and visible PM who has been featured

* Courtesy : *The Tribune*, September 6, 2007

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on the cover of the *Time* magazine, and with the Americans having one of the largest embassies in the world in New Delhi, their Administration has still not understood that for the Sikhs a turban is not just a 'headgear' but an integral part of the Sikh's personality, psyche and religion itself.

The Sikh turban surely does not look like a turban tied in Iran or the conventional Arab headgear. It is tied differently, and is respected by the Sikh as his whole being and 'izzat'. It is also not understood as to how America, the most advanced country in the world technologically, cannot detect metallic and non-metallic objects hidden in the turban without virtually carrying out a strip search of the highly embarrassed individual concerned.

Can not the screening officers differentiate between a Jewish skull cap, a Muslim head scarf or an Arab overwear, so many years after 9/11, and if that is the case then the Indian government needs to educate them on this. The Sikhs' turban is an article of faith for us and everything that goes with it.

Regrettably, the Sikhs, due to their own in-fighting within the SGPC, the Akali Dals interplay with each other, being Punjab-centric in their thinking, and the marked propensity of some Sikh scholars, who, because of small assignments of profit dangled by the government of the day in Punjab, choose to restrict or cannalise their views, end up in a situation where the just cause of the Sikh community suffers.

Is there a solution to this impasse? Yes, and here I believe the Sikhs themselves should have little objection to the suggested proposal. As often happens at our airports in India at Security clearance time, there is no physical touch or handling of the turban and a detector is carefully passed around it, with the dignity of the passenger fully preserved.

If the SGPC agrees to this, then the MEA needs to take up this matter expeditiously with the American government for a similar procedure for the turbaned Sikh traveler. However, if the authorities at an American port have definitely identified a suspicious object in the turban with all the means at their disposal, then quite clearly the person would have to be taken into an enclosure, and not in the open for a fuller check.

We Sikhs too may wish to think it over that if we are to travel internationally in this global world, then some security measures, but enforced with due respect and dignity, may have to be accepted. If this matter is not resolved soon at the highest government level then I fear that other countries in the world, especially in Europe, may follow suit with the American example and, therefore, the Sikh leadership would need to unite and take up its case most expeditiously.

□

*You, O Lord, are the River,
The All-Knower and the All-Seer.
How can I, a mere fish,
Comprehend Your expanse?
Wherever I look,
I see You there.
If I lose You, I will not be able to live.
Even as I know
Neither the net nor the fisherman;
When pain comes,
I call upon You and seek Your refuge.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 25

ਤੂੰ ਦਰੀਆਉ ਦਾਨਾ ਬੀਨਾ ਮੈ ਮਛਲੀ ਕੈਸੇ ਅੰਤੁ ਲਹਾ ॥
ਜਹ ਜਹ ਦੇਖਾ ਤਹ ਤਹ ਤੂੰ ਹੈ ਤੁਝ ਤੇ ਨਿਕਸੀ ਫੁਟਿ ਮਰਾ ॥
ਨ ਜਾਣਾ ਮੇਉ ਨ ਜਾਣਾ ਜਾਲੀ ॥
ਜਾ ਦੁਖੁ ਲਾਗੈ ਤਾ ਤੁਝੈ ਸਮਾਲੀ ॥

CONCEPT OF NATURE IN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

HARDEV SINGH*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of nature has played a predominant role in science and religion since ancient times. Greek philosophers were aware of the role of nature and wrote about it in their philosophical treatises. In fact, before classification of science into different branches, the study of natural phenomena was called natural science or natural philosophy. What do we mean by nature? To understand it, we have to discuss the philosophy of natural science or, in other words, science of nature. But – What is nature?

According to A N Whitehead¹: “Nature is that which we observe in perception through the senses. In this sense perception we are aware of something which is not thought and which is self-contained for thought. This property of being self-contained for thought lies at the base of natural science. It means that nature can be thought of as a closed system whose mutual relations do not require the expression of the fact that they are thought about. Thus in a sense, nature is independent of thought”.

Plato and Aristotle elaborated the Greek thought regarding the fundamental question: What is nature made of? The answer which their genius gave to this question, have determined the unquestioned nature as a process.

Plato asserts that nature is made of fire and earth with air and water as intermediate between them, so that ‘as fire is to air so is air to water, and as air is to water so is water to earth’. This is the origin of

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so-called four element theory of Greeks. Plato also suggests a molecular hypothesis for these four elements. Later on, ether was added as a fifth element. Earth, water, air, fire and ether are related in direct succession and form the ultimate substrata of nature. Matter, in its modern scientific sense, is a return to the Ionian effort to find in space and time some stuff which composes nature. Thus in Greek philosophy, the search for the ultimate entities and their relationship became the cornerstone for the study of nature. This search is the origin of science.

Greek science or natural philosophy held its sway for over two thousand years before it was superseded by experimental science formulated by Galileo and Newton. Concepts of space, time and matter were re-defined and mathematical relations were established through dynamical equations of motion. Modern era, from the beginning of the seventeenth century, has been dominated by a scientific technical worldview, where man is regarded as the key player. The Newtonian world view gave birth to a materialistic philosophy of nature. Laplace had laid down the foundations of mechanistic cosmology which exterminated God, whom Newton, a devout Christian, needed for correcting planetary motion irregularities to prevent collision between them. The Newtonian view of matter as inert substance struck roots in western thought and culture. Man and nature were considered as cogs of a wheel in a machine-like world. The machine mindedness resulted in complete demoralization and depersonalization of the human being.²

The advent of relativity theory and quantum mechanics has brought revolutionary changes in the Newtonian worldview³. Determinism, the philosophical doctrine that the universe is a vast machine operating on a strictly causal basis, is rejected. Space, Time, Matter and Motion find new meanings in the relativistic worldview. In classical physics, space and time existed separately, in mutual isolation. Relativity theory obliterates this distinction between space and time, mass and energy, inertia and gravitation and leads to the unification of field and particle concepts of nature. Relativity theory and quantum mechanics have redefined our notions of physical reality. The sharp boundaries that existed between space and time, mass and energy, fields and particles, subjects and objects, wave and particles,

have disappeared and there appears interconnectedness between all parts of nature as a whole.

CONCEPT OF NATURE IN GURBANI

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion, was fully aware of the ancient Indian thought and its implications concerning nature. He had firsthand knowledge of both Hindu and Muslim viewpoints about nature. Surprisingly, Guru Nanak opted for Arabic term '*qudret*' for nature in comparison to Sanskrit term '*prakriti*' which occurs in Samkhya school of Indian philosophy.

The concept of *purusa* and *prakriti* is cornerstone of Indian philosophy. Broadly speaking, Samkhya dualism⁴ of *purusa* and *prakriti* may be compared with Cartesian dualism of subject and object which has dominated the western thought. Samkhya divides all things into two categories: (a) things which possess consciousness (*chetan*), (b) things which are unconscious (*jada*) are objects of consciousness. The totality of *jada* things is called *prakriti* (nature).

According to the Hindu view, matter is eternal and *purusa* (creator) has always been independent of God. It is the *purusa* who rules *prakriti* and creates the universe. The ultimate constituents of which *prakriti* is composed are *gunas* which are three in number; *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. According to Kapur Singh⁵, Guru Nanak has abandoned the term *prakriti* while retaining the term *purusa* in his description of nature, after noting the dualism of Hindu philosophy.

Why Guru Nanak was at pains to borrow a fundamental term (*qudret*) of Sikh philosophy from a source, non Indo-Sanskrit? It would appear that main reasons were three⁵:

- i. Primarily, Guru Nanak wanted a term of philosophy to which he could impart a connotation and meanings as would fit with the base of the religion that he revealed.
- ii. Incidentally, Guru Nanak wanted to break the shell of prejudice enclosing the Hindu mind and attitudes toward modes of human communication other than Indo-Sanskrit. There is a severe injunction in the *Bhavisyapurana*⁶: "Even if the consequence is death, a true Hindu should refuse to learn the vulgar speech of the western regions."
- iii. Lastly, the Hindu mind was afflicted with a gross bias for centuries

past, symptomatic of dogmatism and mental stagnation. The famous Indologist, Al-Birumi in his *Kittabul-Hind*, has recorded: "The Hindus think that there is no science, no knowledge which exists or has originated beyond the frontiers of the sacred land of India."

Guru Nanak aimed at opening the windows of the human mind to all the four quarters of space so that man's mind may grow freely and his soul remain whole through healthy contact with the insights gained by mankind in all countries, and in all ages. Hence, he preferred to use '*qudret*' for nature in his compositions.

Recently, a Ph D thesis at Jamia Milia, Delhi, was submitted by Faisal Mustafa on the subject: "*The World of Nature: A Quranic View*". Some of the conclusions of this study⁷ are:

- i. The Quranic depiction of nature may serve as one of the most convincing proofs of 'one and only one creator', who has powers over all things and who regulates the affairs of the cosmos.
- ii. Almighty god controls nature with all its manifestations, and it clearly indicates a well-defined order prevailing in nature.
- iii. There is a very sound connectedness, harmony and interrelationship among all the manifestations of nature.
- iv. Supreme God governs the forces that are governing the affairs of this huge cosmos and these are willingly doing their specific functions.
- v. The whole nature is full of beauty, bounty, and perfection.

By juxtaposition of Quranic term '*qudret*' against the Samkhya term '*prakriti*', we can easily understand and appreciate the choice of the term '*qudret*' to represent nature in all its manifestations by Guru Nanak. In the opening sloka of Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS), Guru Nanak defines the various attributes of God, the ultimate reality. He calls Him '*Karta Purkh*', the creator person and not merely a *purusa*. Hence, in the scheme of things envisaged for his worldview, Guru Nanak employed '*qudret*' to represent nature.

According to Kapur Singh⁸, Guru Nanak employed the Arabic term *qudret* as the second term of the dualism, with *Purukh* as the first. *Qudret* means "that under the power and authority of its Master". In *Quran*, al-Qadir as one of the attributes of God is distinguishable from another attribute, al-Khaliq, which means the creator. Guru Nanak

includes both these attributes of God in his use of the term, *qudret* for nature.⁹

*He Himself creates and arranges the Nature,
He Himself controls its progression and evolution.*

According to Guru Nanak, God first created Himself and then at a second stage of creation shaped *qudret* (nature) out of his own goodwill to enjoy the creation process¹⁰:

*The universal self (God) created the individual self,
He Himself created the differentiating names.
Thus Nature hath He created as the 'other',
And depositing Himself therein.
He contemplates on Nature.*

In Rag Asa¹¹, Guru Nanak has written a long poem eulogizing *qudret* in its various manifestations as revealed through the creation process. In fact, God not only plays the role of creator but also reveller and sustainer of creation through *qudret* (nature):

*Nature is all that appears and bears,
Nature is the world as seen, felt and appreciated.
Nature is all the spaces, and
Nature is totality of forms.*

Nature, like God, is also limitless and beyond comprehension. The abode of God is nature itself¹²:

*Glory to Thee who dwelleth in Nature,
Infinite and Eternal,
Thy limits and frontiers are unknowable.*

Guru Nanak rejects the Vedantic concept that the created world and nature in all its manifestations is *maya*, a mere illusion, and only God is real. According to Sikh viewpoint, both God and *qudret* (nature) are true as recorded in Guru Granth Sahib¹³:

O true Lord, Thy created Nature is real.

The study of nature has been given the highest priority in *Gurbani*. Guru Nanak has identified the manifest reality or God with nature¹⁴:

*"Nanak, the beneficent Lord alone is true,
He is revealed through His Nature".*

It is also emphasized in *Gurbani* that God or the Creator can be realized by man in his own body through Nature¹⁵:

*"He who has created the world in which
He abides as Immanent,
That Lord may be recognized through Nature.
He is not to be regarded as wholly Transcendent;
His voice can be heard in every heart".*

God being the Creator Person(*Karta Purkh*) is also known as *Qadir* in Quranic vocabulary¹⁶. He is the absolute controller of destiny of Man and Nature:

*"All that is your qudret, and
You are its Qadir and Karta, i.e.,
Absolute Controller and Creator"*

God is the creator of Nature and He is fully involved and absorbed in Nature¹⁷.

*"God creates Nature and alone
He contemplates it".*

We may conclude that Guru Nanak's vision of Nature is far more comprehensive than his predecessors both in the East and the West. It is a holistic vision which can act as a platform for a dialogue between science and religion. Guru Nanak's mission was to create an ideal society of *Gurmukhs* (guru-oriented personalities) where man can live in tune with nature. The message of Guru Nanak and his vision of nature need to be broadcast to the modern man in search of ecological balance and craving for inner peace.

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## THE TEMPLE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS - THE DRAVIDIAN AND SIKH RESPONSE -

M S AHLUWALIA\*

In our own times Social Scientists have made considerable advances in understanding the various forms of protestant movements, revolts and anti-establishment organizations in India. A large number of studies have come out in case of different protestant movements. The present study, however, is related to two important movements, one in south (Tamil Nadu) and the other in north (Punjab) led by the Dravidian parties and the Akalis, respectively, in the first half of the twentieth century. The aim of the paper is to have a comparative study of the Temple Entry Movement led by the Dravidians in Tamil Nadu and the Gurdwara Reform Movement led by the Akalis in the Punjab.

In Tamil Nadu, it was the case of a socio-political identity by the non-Brahmins against the Brahmins who had taken advantage of their superior birth and status, and had introduced their 'inscriptive hegemonies, projects to accelerate the persistence of pollution or puritan theory'. In case of the Sikhs of Punjab, the urge for democratic control and management of the Sikh gurdwaras or Sikh temples, which had been controlled by professional, hereditary and corrupt priests, called *Mahants*, led to a fierce movement by Sikh volunteers called Akalis during the first quarter of the twentieth century.

The Brahminic and Hindu mobilization, which became conspicuous during the first half of the twentieth century, was misconceived as pan-nationalism by the nationalist historians. However, it proved as a blessing in disguise for the Tamils and the

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Sikhs who mobilized themselves in Tamil Nadu and Punjab to frustrate the Brahminic and Hindu grand designs of reforming Hinduism from within. A beginning had been made with Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Brahmo Samaj in the early nineteenth century which tried to "reconstruct Brahminism under influence of colonial modernity"<sup>1</sup>

### **THE DRAVIDIAN MOVEMENT**

In case of Tamil Nadu, it was a movement spearheaded by the Dravidian political parties for an unrestricted entry into the temples and in case of Punjab it was a movement led by the Sikh volunteers, called Akalis, to liberate the Sikh temples from the control of the Mahants, who had become hereditary and corrupt. The aim of both these movements was the same, i.e., freeing the places of worship and making these accessible for all castes through legal and agitational means. However, in case of the Dravidian movement, it was socio-political and caste-based whereas the Akali movement was politico-religious. On the one hand, it aimed to identify Sikhism as an independent world religion with a view to counter the Christian missionaries who were keen on conversions and, on the other hand, to check the scurrilous attacks of the Arya Samajis on the Sikh Gurus and their faith.

### **THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND**

A unique feature of the Indian society during the first half of the twentieth century was characterized by religious revivalism and caste consciousness. The caste controlled the destiny of man, and human beings came into this world with a pre-caste destiny, depending on whether he was born a Brahmin or in any of the numerous castes and sub-castes. Based upon Varna system, the Aryans had divided the society into four castes. The traditional caste system had the Brahmin at its apex. Though they formed minority part of the population, they occupied a distinct position in Indian social order. They formed the centre of religious, political and social activities and were at the helm of affairs, both spiritual and temporal, since times immemorial in the Indian society. Law had been in the hands of this dominant minority as an instrument of class domination and exploitation.

### THE HINDU LEGACY: VARNA ASHRAM DHARMA

One who has studied the caste legacy of Hinduism will find an answer to the developments in Tamil Nadu as well as Punjab in the form of liberation movements. To this day, the ethics of Hindu elite reflect the teachings of two most renowned Hindu thinkers, Manu and Kautilya (Chanakya), who were the founders of the policy of "divide and rule" and were responsible for shaping the destiny of Hindu society through out the ages. Permanent human inequality by birth is the summum bonum of Brahminical ideology.

The Brahmins proclaimed that Prajapati (God) created the caste-system and made a Shudra a slave of the higher castes. Moreover, Prajapati was the God of Aryans only, from whom the Shudras were excluded. It was also claimed that gods do not associate with every man, but only with an Arya. A Kshatriya or a Vaishya can only make religious sacrifices to gods. Nor one should talk with every one, as God does not talk to everybody but only to an Arya. Thus the Shudra was excluded from the domain of religion and barred from any religious activity.

This system was designed to serve the interests of a small minority of people, the Brahmins, at the expense of vast majority belonging to other castes, the bulk of whom belonged to the Shudra caste. Lower still were the *Antyaja* (untouchables/outcastes), whose mere shadow could pollute the upper caste persons. The entire conquered/enslaved population of Adivasis (aboriginal tribes) called Dravidians was forced into Shudra and untouchable outcaste ranks. Never in the history of mankind was such an "evil and cruel system" conceived by intelligent but devious men for the exploitation of man by man. It were the Brahmins who profited most from this system and were mainly responsible for its maintenance and furtherance.<sup>2</sup>

#### 1

### (THE TEMPLE ENTRY MOVEMENT IN TAMIL NADU)

#### CLASS DOMINATION BY BRAHMINS

The Brahmins, who were in the upper strata of the Indian society, occupied an eminent position both in north and south India. In case of Tamil Nadu, Brahmins were only two per cent of the total Tamil

population and resided at places known as Agraharam. In Tamil Nadu there were two broad categories of Brahmins, namely, Iyers and Ayengars. Occupationally, they were further divided into Vedic Brahmins, domestic Brahmins and temple priests. Nearly half of the Tamil Brahmins lived mostly in three districts of Thanjavur, Tiruchirappalli and Tirunelveli.<sup>3</sup>

They became the elite administrative group in the Tamil society. In most of the cases they led a luxurious life and gave their lands to non-Brahmin tenants for lease or cultivated it with the help of the labourers. Thus they obtained income both from landed property as well as temple assets. All socio-political and religious activities were dominated by the Brahmins which were directly responsible for the aggravation of the caste system in Tamil Nadu.<sup>4</sup>

### **THE CASTE HINDUS**

The non-Brahmin caste Hindus were placed next to Brahmins in the social stratification. Among them, Mudaliars (literally meaning a first rank person or a leader), Vellalars (meaning cultivators who were Shaivites), Chettiars (traders), Naidus, Naicks and Kammalas exercised great influence over the Tamil society. The non-Brahmin caste Hindu community played a significant role as agriculturists, traders or artisans. Among the non-Brahmins in general, the backward and scheduled castes were numerically strong. They consisted of Nadars, Vanniars and Thevars, etc (who were mostly cultivators or warriors). A majority of them were settled mostly in Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari, Madurai and Ramanathapuram districts.<sup>5</sup>

### **THE SUBALTERN GROUPS**

The depressed class people occupied the lowest rank in the social ladder. They were labourers in agriculture or other public works. They were differently named as Panchamas, Untouchables, Adi-Dravidas and the Fifth Varna or as Harijans (a term coined by Mahatma Gandhi). Numerically, they formed one-fifth of the total population of Madras Presidency and inhabited all districts of Tamil Nadu. The use of public wells, tanks and roads was prohibited to the depressed classes. The principle of untouchability was carried too far in the observance of what was called distance pollution, and so they were not allowed to approach the Hindu temples.<sup>6</sup>



### PROGRESSIVE MEASURES BY THE BRITISH

During the colonial rule however, silent revolution was set in motion which brought about some basic changes in Indian society due to the works of both Missionaries as well as Hindu reformers in Tamil Nadu during the first half of the twentieth century. The human-minded organizations, brought to some extent, the neglected sections of the Tamil society to a level ground to compete with the people of other castes with equal chances. The European Christian missionaries laid the foundation for the upliftment of the depressed people. Though they were interested in evangelization, they attacked the superstitious beliefs and the caste atrocities of those days. They created a new awareness among the outcaste groups. The so-called "polluting castes" began to convert to Christianity, which promised self-respect to the Tamil subaltern groups.

### PUBLIC ASSOCIATIONS AND SOCIO-RELIGIOUS REFORM MOVEMENTS

In spite of the colonial nature of the British rule, spectacular changes took place in the thinking pattern of the people, more significantly during the second half of the twentieth century. On the one hand, there took place political awakening as a counter-move against the administrative policies of the colonial power. On the other hand, the progressive legislations and reform measures introduced by the British supplemented the socio-political consciousness. The non-Brahmins, along with other depressed classes began to organize themselves for social justice. In fact, social justice became a key word for social harmony and national unity.

The elite socio-religious leaders, both at national and regional level, organized many associations and educated the masses against the institution of untouchability. The removal of untouchability and all its allied evils formed an important item in the programme of socio-religious reformers both at national and regional level. The most notable associations formed during the colonial rule were Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Brahmo Samaj (1828); Keshab Chander Sen's Prarthana Samaj; Jyotirao Phule's Satyashodha Samaj (1877); Dayananda Saraswati's Arya Samaj (1875); Swami Vivekananda's Ramakrishna Mission; Madam Blavatsky and Col. Olcott's Theosophical Society (1886); Sri Narayana Guru's Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (1903).<sup>7</sup>

Besides these organizations many community-minded individual leaders advocated and fought for socio-political awakening and removal of caste distinctions. Some of the prominent leaders were Muthukkutti Swamigal, Ramalinga Adigal.

### **TEMPLE ENTRY ATTEMPTS AND ITS IMPACT**

In Tamil Nadu many of the significant temples were consecrated to the Brahminical deities. They were open only to the upper caste-Hindus. The non-caste Hindus could not enter the temples located particularly in Thanjavur, Madurai, Srirangam, Erode, Sivakasi, Tirunelveli and Trichendur for worship. Temple entry by the non Brahmins, especially by the depressed classes of Tamil Nadu formed an important stage in the social reform movement in modern period. Since the temple was an important factor in the economic and social activities of the Tamilians, a denial of any opportunity to worship, created a space for agitation and confrontation. The question of worship in the temple was, therefore, taken as a first challenge in the future course of action by the Nadars who made the first attempt at temple entry in a remote village (Aruppukkottai) in Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu. The agitation later spread to different parts of Tirunelveli and Madurai districts. The Nadars of Sivakasi began to adopt Brahminical habits such as in wearing dress, tuft, sacred thread and eating vegetarian food.<sup>8</sup>

### **LEGISLATIVE MEASURES**

Unfortunately, the courts set up for maintaining social harmony and equal treatment on the basis of the law of land, failed to do justice because the law was interpreted on the basis of social practices and caste distinctions. Political compulsions regarding communal electorate compelled Congress party to intensify the temple entry and anti-untouchability campaign through numerous bills and acts in the central and provincial legislatures of India. While Mahatma Gandhi started Civil disobedience Movement for political freedom, leaders led by B R Ambedkar sought safeguards in the form of reservation of seats in the central and provincial legislatures based on proportional representation. The issue regarding communal representation was given the final shape by the Poona Pact of 24 September 1932. As an immediate impact of the Poona Pact, the caste Hindus, at a public

meeting in Bombay on 25<sup>th</sup> September, 1932, passed a significant resolution that it shall be the duty of all Hindu leaders to secure, by every legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities now imposed by custom upon the so-called untouchable classes, including the bar in respect to admission to temples.

The Temple Entry Resolution marked the beginning of an agitational politics in Tamil Nadu for the abolition of untouchability. The resolution included three notable provisions. (1) It urged the government to recognize the strong and growing public feeling in the Hindu community to remove the disabilities of common worship at temples (2) It sought the opening of the temples to the depressed classes taking advantage of the Poona pact. (3) It demanded the government to bring a legislation to open the temples to the depressed classes with regulations not affecting the prevailing order and cleanliness in temples as well as the performance of ceremonies according to the traditional convention of the temples. The resolution was accepted by the majority without dissent voice. Meanwhile, M C Rajah, a member of the Central Legislature presented the Untouchability Abolition Bill in December 1932.<sup>10</sup>

The "Removal of Depressed Classes Disabilities Bill" proposed towards the end of 1932 by Narayanan Nambiar, a member of the Madras Legislative Council, was also supported by Mahatma Gandhi since it tried to live up to the promises he had made in the Poona Pact. Gandhi also started his Harijan welfare schemes through issuing a series of statements related to temple entry, Hinduism, depressed classes and removal of untouchability.<sup>16</sup>

As a result of these concerted efforts by socially motivated Dravidian organizations and enlightened individuals, temple entry disabilities Act was passed in the late 1930s.

## CONCLUSION

Needless to say that obstruction to temple entry movement was rooted in the meaningless and false beliefs of the caste Hindus. Thanks to the efforts of Rajaji and other leaders, Tamil Nadu was saved from the age-old clutches of superstitious beliefs. The Tamil society undoubtedly progressed substantially towards social equalities after the successful temple agitations.

## II

**THE GURDWARA REFORM MOVEMENT IN PUNJAB**

The rise of the Sikhs to political power is a landmark in the history of India. However, although the political power was in the hands of the Sikhs, most of the predominant positions in the government came to be held by the Hindus, particularly the Brahmins and through their social influence, the old Braminical ways of life began to creep into the Sikh society. Not only discarded gods and goddesses for long began to appear in the Sikh temples, but even the Hindu rites and rituals began to be observed in the outer precincts of the Sikh temples.

As is well known, after its annexation to the British Empire in India, Punjab was placed under a new colonial administration. However, the people of Punjab viewed the new government with contempt, distrust and resentment. As in the case of Tamil Nadu, the Christian missionaries became active in Punjab who, being aided and encouraged by higher authorities, promoted conversion among the ranks of both high and low caste Sikhs... Apart from the activities of the Christian missionaries, the Sikhs could not also escape the influence of Brahminical Hinduism.<sup>12</sup> Fortunately, the Sikh leaders were quick to notice the hidden agenda of the anti-Sikh forces and began to think about the future of their community .

The Brahmins slowly marked their presence as the presiding priests at the birth, marriage and death ceremonies of the Sikhs. This deteriorating state of affairs and anti-Sikh practices led to the Nirankari and Namdhari movements about five years before the Indian Mutiny\* of 1857 in Punjab. The Nirankaris were very active in the north-western districts of the Punjab whereas the Namdharis were confined to the Cis-Sutlej area in Punjab. The main objective of both these movements was to restore Sikhism to its pristine glory and to bring back into the Sikh fold the apostates. The real aim of these movements was an urge for democratic control and management of the Sikh gurdwaras which had become the centers of Braminical domination and had become almost hereditary.

After the failure of the Nirankari and Namdhari movements, a new movement called Singh Sabha Movement, began under the influence of the western ideas and tried to bring about a new social and religious improvement. The Singh Sabha gave a new interpretation

to the Sikh doctrine in the light of western influence and thus prepared the necessary ground-work in developing the community into a self-conscious nationality ready to guard its interests at any price. This new movement on broad socio-religious basis was organized under the Presidentship of Sardar Thakar Singh Sandhawalia.<sup>13</sup>

The hectic social, educational and religious activities of the Singh Sabha created a great stir and brought about an awakening among the Sikhs. The Sikh gatherings were used by the Sikh leaders to inflame the martial spirit of the Sikhs and to foster an idea that, if united, the Sikhs could make the country free. There was also a section among the Sikhs, who, apart from maintaining their separate entity, longed to re-establish the Sikh rule in the Punjab. The movement also turned towards another objective, viz., the attainment of an independent Sikh identity. This objective was quite in tune with the prevalent Sikh mood then.

Like the Dravidians, a self-conscious group identity amongst the Sikhs had been formed by the end of the second decade of the twentieth century. However, the decisive phase in the growth of Sikh identity and Sikh temple liberation movement came in the early 1920's during the Gurdwara Reform Movement (1920-25) which is also known the Akali Movement.<sup>14</sup>

As in case of Tamil Nadu, the Sikh shrines, known as gurdwaras or *dharamsals* came to play a vital role in the socio-religious life of the Sikhs. Unfortunately, the management of these gurdwaras, in the absence of specific rules, gradually passed into the hands of the 'Udasis' who professed Sikhism but did not conform to outward physical symbols of Sikhism. Those among them who became heads of the Sikh gurdwaras came to be known as Mahants.

### THE MAHANTS

The institution of Mahant, like the Brahmin priesthood in Tamil Nadu, became hereditary. The increase in income of Sikh temples, derived from revenue free *jagirs* bestowed on most of the historic shrines by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and other Sikh Misl rulers, led to the deterioration in the lifestyle of these Mahants. During the British rule, these Mahants played to the tune of the new masters. They made full use of the British sympathy for them and, therefore, in connivance

with them they had, by decrees, converted the lands endowed to the Sikh gurdwaras to be shown in revenue records as their own hereditary lands.<sup>15</sup>

As already noticed above, it was the denial of depressed classes' right to worship in the Hindu temples managed by Brahmin priests, which prompted a violent movement in Tamil Nadu. In case of Punjab, it was the corrupt practices started by the Mahants. In most of the cases, the gurdwara properties were converted into personal possessions. However, most serious flaw became apparent when the Mahants reverted back to some of the discarded Hindu religious ceremonies.

With a view to earn more money from the gurdwaras, the Mahants started Brahminical Hindu practices. They placed the idols of Hindu gods and goddesses in the Sikh temples, including the Golden temple.<sup>23</sup> This undoubtedly became the most potent cause of resentment among the radical Sikh reformers who resorted to both legal as well as agitational means to dislodge the Mahants and taking control of the Gurdwaras with the help of Singh Sabha leaders.

The Tat Khalsa was the first body to reform Sikhism through education, journalism and preaching. The Khalsa ideal was now distinguished by a new consistency and new clarity of vision. The non-Sikh features were either rejected or suitably modified. An appropriate history of the Sikh Panth was formulated; powerful stress was laid on the importance of Guru Granth Sahib and the Sikhs were exhorted to observe only those conventions which would proclaim their separate identity. The most prominent among these conventions was the observance of Five Ks. Two major gains of the period can be seen as general acceptance that the Sikhs are not Hindus and that a true Sikh will normally be a Khalsa.<sup>16</sup>

These radical reformers, also known as Tat Khalsa or the neo-Sikhs, launched the first peaceful agitation over the issue of demolition of a wall of Gurdwara Rakab Ganj in Delhi in 1912. This was the beginning of the organization of local Akali Jathas to launch peaceful agitation for dislodging the Mahants and taking control of the gurdwaras. The time chosen for starting the agitation for ousting the Mahants was quite opportune with the non-cooperation movement in

full swing in Punjab while the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy had added fuel to the fire.<sup>17</sup>

### THE SIKH TEMPLE LIBERATION MOVEMENT

The actual Sikh temple liberation movement, however, started in 1920 and continued for five years. The hallmark of the programme was to liberate the Gurdwaras from the Mahants and pass on their control and management into the hands of a chosen body from the Sikh Sangat as per democratic traditions or the Sikh faith.

The agitation which was initiated by the local Akalis in their respective areas was soon directed and controlled by the two representative bodies of the Sikhs, viz, Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), both of which exist even now.<sup>18</sup>

In course of their struggle, the Akalis launched various 'morchas' (battle fronts) and were successful in liberating over two hundred large and small Gurdwaras from the control of the Mahants. The important morchas were the morchas of Babe-di-Ber, Tarn Taran, the Key Affair, Guru Ka Bagh, Jaito and the Nankana Sahib.<sup>19</sup> The very formation of the Committee (SGPC) for the management of the Gurdwaras by the Sikh community at Amritsar on November 15, 1920, had alarmed the old priests and Mahant Narain Das of Nankana Sahib Janam-Asthan, the birth place of Guru Nanak. He not only resisted the transfer of the control of the Sikh shrine to the Committee but also massacred in cold blood (February 21, 1920), more than one hundred Sikh volunteers, called the Akalis, who had gone there to take possession of this Gurdwara.

The Nankana Sahib massacre by the hired goons of Mahant Narain Das aroused the feelings of the whole Sikh community for the Sikh control of their shrines. The struggle continued for the next five years when the Punjab Legislative Council finally passed the Gurdwaras Act of 1925 (it actually came into operation on November 1). The bill envisaged the establishment of a central board of management of all Sikh temples. The board was to consist of 121 elected members, together with the chief priests of the five important Sikh Gurdwaras, including the Golden Temple. The term Sikh was defined in the Bill to mean, "A person who professes the Sikh faith." The Bill further laid

down that a person would or would not be deemed to be a Sikh depending on whether or not he makes a declaration, stating:

"I solemnly affirm that I am a Sikh and that I believe in the Guru Granth Sahib and in the Ten Gurus and that I have no other religion."<sup>20</sup>

Whereas the Sikh leaders asserted their separate identity, the Hindu leaders launched a persistent campaign through press and public platforms that Sikhs were a sect within Hinduism. This persistent effort by the Hindu leaders to keep the Sikh community within its fold only backfired. It resulted in the Sikhs becoming more and more determined to scrap their alleged affinities with the Hindus and de-Hinduise their temples. Henceforth, the ten Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib became the centre of the Sikh universe. Its radical members (*Tat Khalsa*) began earnestly to reconstitute sacred space by initiating several measures such as: a campaign against seasonal fairs held within the precincts of the gurdwaras, the removal of non-Sikh icons from the Sikh shrines and a strident call for the reform gurdwara management

Like the temple entry legislation in Tamil Nadu, the Punjab Legislative Council introduced the final bill called the "Sikh Shrines and Gurdwaras Bill" on May 27, 1925. The temple entry movement in Tamil Nadu was opposed by parties and individuals having vested interests. However, in case of Punjab the nation-wide all parties' announcements favouring the Gurdwara Reforms boosted the image of the Akali Dal and the Shiromani Committee in the eyes of the countrymen. In order to extract the maximum mileage from the above, the Akali party too made a sincere effort to ensure that nothing should be done even by the extreme rank and file to create any types of communal question not only between the Hindus and the Sikhs, but also between the latter and the Muslim brethren and thereby to defeat the aim of the British to divide them on communal lines.<sup>21</sup> The Akalis were praised throughout the country as the messengers of Swadeshi Movement.

The Akalis at the end, not only succeeded in getting the Gurdwaras freed from the hands of the Mahants but also wisely got the management of all the Gurdwaras transferred to a purely non-political body (SGPC), whose membership, mode of election of its members and its functioning was fully delineated in the Act itself. The movement went a long way in preserving the sanctity of the Gurdwara



in accordance with the egalitarian principles and convention viz, impartial distribution of *kerah parshad*, the convention of *langar*, and the traditional concept of *sewa* (service) and congregational worship and *ardas* (The Sikh prayer)<sup>22</sup> The key-note of the movement was 'back to Guru Granth Sahib' to counter the allegation that the Sikh Gurus had preached the religious system of the Vedas.<sup>23</sup>

The temple liberation movements in Tamil Nadu and Punjab were religious and social reformist movements which went a long way in reforming and transforming the society. Although response and reaction in both the cases varied according to the prevailing circumstances, the movements helped in advancement of the Hindu and Sikh faiths, both in north and south simultaneously and saved the two faiths from internal decay. The traditional basis of religious practices and customs were given up in favour of reason. Western ideas like social equality, moral and ethical basis of religion and equal values and status to all individuals, were accepted by the custodians of the religious shrines – though at a very heavy price.

Both the movements were anti-feudal and anti-Brahminical and were aimed at safe guarding their cultural identities. The temple entry movement in Tamil Nadu and the temple liberation movement in Punjab went a long way in reforming and transforming the society both in the south and north India. While in the south it led to the emancipation of the weaker and downtrodden sections, in Punjab it saved the Sikh religion from degeneration. Both the movements were organized in such a way that these were successful in stemming the tide of the Brahminical hold over the places of worship.

The two movements brought about religious awakening, self-consciousness and political advantages to both the Dravidians and the Sikhs. The immediate impact of the two movements was that it gave birth to the new impulses and aspirations which motivated all the communities in the north as well as the south to join together and work for the freedom of the country. It may be relevant to say that after a relentless struggle for the socio-religious reforms during the colonial period, both the Dravidian and the Akali parties are still active and are pursuing the goal of securing more economic and political advantages for their respective communities.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The present study is based mainly on the official documents and private publications which highlight the socio-religious activities in Tamil Nadu and Punjab during the early twentieth century. The writer acknowledges his gratitude to Muthu Mohan whose 'preliminary enquiry' about the Dravidian and Akali movements became a source of inspiration and further study. See Muthu Mohan, "The Akali and Dravidian Movements - A preliminary Enquiry for Comparative Studies", *Sikh Spectrum*, February 2007.
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temperament, made them zealous fighters for religious causes.

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□

*Know this for truth, says Nanak,  
Everything happens as God wills.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 148

ਨਾਨਕ ਏਵੈ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਸਭ ਕਿਛੁ ਤਿਸਹਿ ਰਜਾਇ ॥

## THE DIVINE GAME PLAN\*

GAJINDER SINGH\*\*

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A God-oriented soul is defined as a person who has no personal biases left to conquer. He is so absorbed in God that he has ceased to have a distinct personality of his own independent of the Creator. His union with the Will of God is total and irreversible, rendering his separate entity indistinguishable. In Sikhism, this position has been called the *turiya pad*. It qualifies for a degree beyond and above the three dimensional *mayaic* state of the ordinary human beings who revolve under the influence and shades of the ever changing moods which govern them. In a way, the entire human drama is a struggle to step out of the binding hold of the three major *tri-guna* whims or impulses, restraining a person from free expression and action to the best of his imagination and ability.

The Sikhs believe that God has spread out a game plan in which all creation is running an obstacle race to reach the *turiya pad* which is 'home'.

*My true Lord has set off a game,  
None resembles the other,  
He sees with indulgence the diversity,  
All pleasures are contained in this body.<sup>1</sup>*

And, yet more affirmative,

*Triumph over amor, rage, voracity and avarice,  
God is fond of such a game.<sup>2</sup>*

The expression, 'triumph' underlines the Guru's conviction that a Sikh must engage in this competitive game essentially to win. *Nischey kar apni jeet karon*, the call given by Guru Gobind Singh to rouse the dormant energies of a vanquished race as well as the individual's moral

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rejuvenation to live as per the Sikh mode of life.

Actions and retributions are the fate of the people who are caught in the web of this game and trying hard to solve the riddle by their own intellect, whatever the strength and reach of it. Low intellect will obviously produce inferior solutions and better counsel should prevail to achieve higher results. To that end, one has to sharpen one's intelligence, knowledge, the layout of the Divine game plan before struggling to find his way in a blind alley that is the world. Like the game of 'Snakes and Ladders,' one wrong throw of dice may topple all achievements and another may push a person to the top space.

*The world uses the Vedic knowledge of tri-guna,  
Devoid of contemplation, one undergoes transmigration infinitely,  
One gets release by meeting the true Master, obtaining salvation.<sup>3</sup>*

And

*He plays and watches His game,  
The game finishes, Nanak, only He remains.<sup>4</sup>*

## II

As each one struggles in fits and starts or by trials and errors, he learns to improve over the past blunders. Or is it the correct dice moved at the right time and place, which boosts his position, one never knows. Is it sheer Grace of the Lord which enhances one's stock or perhaps His game plan which is beyond a man's capacity to decipher, but the Guru is so unambiguously positive that rites and ceremonies and injunctions of Code of Conduct, strenuous rituals have no place in reaching 'the home'. May be some people are favourably placed in life and their approach is correct, so that they can grasp the purport of the *turiya pad* and live in a state of perpetual *vairag*, while there are others who strive for small gains which are for ever elusive. In whatever circumstances a man has been placed by Providence, play he must this game, to the best of his ability, and in the limited time assigned to each one.

At this stage, the cleavage between the spiritual 'Haves and Have-nots' is widely discernible. The God-oriented who have placed their will and their very being in God live as per His *Raza*, in sheer contrast to those who neither understand the divine discipline nor favour acceptance of His Will. While the former category of persons have

an all-encompassing attitude of non-confrontation, the other contest God and His discipline at each step and apply their intellect at each move for a favourable solution to their advantage. Obviously, the spiritual advice and guidance to either category require a different approach and cannot be uniform and the same.

The God-oriented described as *gurmukhs* may need only elementary signals to keep to the right path. The ego-centric *manmukhs*, on the other hand, require detailed discussions and arguments, firstly to make them aware of the limitations of their knowledge and the sheer vastness of the subject, and then to convince them to change their attitude to conform to and assimilate the Prime spiritual authority. The message to the *Gurmukhs* is, of course, of a depth which cannot be fathomed by the *manmukhs*, even if they listened to the *sabds* repeatedly. However, such spiritual discourses are easily understood and routinely absorbed by the *gurmukhs*. It is evident that the common people read and hear hymns and sing them daily but are unable to conceive the core point, whatever the language employed.

In all societies and cults, the veiled procedures and proceedings are not open to the public unless they are properly initiated into that degree of knowledge and perception. Among the Hindus, a priest is essentially ordained to preside over ceremonies as well as interpret the law. Similarly among other major communities, the Jews, Christians, Muslims, Jains and Buddhists, the rituals and the laws are interpreted for the lay members by their clergy. It is perhaps only in Sikhism that the priestly class was abolished as such. Wherever the Sikhs have re-employed priests, they have been found grossly incompetent and unacquainted with their creed and its basic dogmas. Every Sikh has to delve deep into religion and find his level of understanding.

There are, thus, no varying levels of *Gurmukhs*, who live steadfast at the fourth stage, the *turiya* pad, or spiritual emancipation beyond the tri-*guna maya* or temporal bondage. The Guru's voice, the *Gurbani*, is crystal clear to this class of the Sikhs. They are what Islam calls the 'blessed lot'. They stay in '*raza*.' The problem with the others is that they are always struggling, meshed in the uncertainty of duality, between ravenous, unquenchable hunger for selfish gains and craze for glory, and contentment and satiation. As oft stated, it is not to be confused with abandoning of effort by the *gurmukh*. The daily routin

of worldly functions continues to be taken in all seriousness and one remains, rather more committed to all jobs in hand as well as plans for future, but does not crib or become vengeful if his effort does not yield desired results.

### III

This point has been discussed repeatedly to make the materialist distinguish the fine difference between the spiritually charged person and his own lot. Let me relate the story of a person who was an artist and produced a pile of paintings. He held exhibitions of his art repeatedly and eagerly sought the newspapers to read the critics' evaluation of his efforts. The critics remained either unrelentingly unkind in their brief reviews or ignored him altogether. He ranted and called them insensible to the true art which he supposed, was his forte. He felt that one day people will discover him as had been the case with the world's famous artists and perhaps it will come late, beyond his life time. He became more aggressive in displays and jacked up the prices of his canvasses which no body cared to buy.

One day, he implored me to go to his house to hear the musical genius his daughter had become. She had completed her Master's degree in Music and was thoroughly accomplished in theory and practice of Music. I found her lacking in the subtle expression and finer feelings and delicate paroxysm which hold a listener, transcending the heights of emotions. She was theoretically correct, perfect in notes and articulation of the compositions. It was evident that the young lady had worked hard on her music to justify her Master's certificate. But, somehow, Muses eluded her as much as her father missed out in capturing the verve and spirit of the point he was trying to convey. The father and daughter wistfully dreamt of the thunderous clapping of the surging crowds and the raving Reviews by the critics. I sat quiet, unable to find the strength and words to tell them that the body was indeed there but there was no life, no spirit, nothing unique and soulful in their artistic rendering.

However, it was clear that they wanted to improve their skills in their respective fields. A worse situation would be, not being aware of the deficiency in the first place. Such vain and futile persons are always over-confident of their efforts and stay within that inaccuracy

without even knowing and acknowledging it. In this case, they both wanted to improve and attain better qualifications and quality. It is very rarely that a true master comes along, holds the hand of the novice and carries the person to finality. That occasion is called, in artistic expression, a gift, a bequest. The Eastern masters have had a bad reputation of withholding the secrets of excellence, due to a miserly, mean streak in their character to keep hidden the key of the ultimate in knowledge and skill. They are known to conceal the exact core of the matter till they breathed their last, burying or burning the secret with their funeral pyre. The student had to be very ingenious to snatch it from the grip of the master. But how many persons are endowed with the right amount of dexterity. The Sikh Gurus, on the other hand, laid the secret open for all to grasp. It requires complete obedience, total commitment and lovingly waiting for the grace.

Not that the young lady did not engage superb maestros to be her tutors, besides a post-graduate degree in Music, her father wanted her to get the best lessons and capture the highest tradition of music. Additionally, she had learnt musical traditions of Western as well as Chinese lore. Yet there was a lack of that fine touch that transforms music into a melody. Either the teachers did not impart that in-depth secret to her or she could not imbibe it to soar to those heights which she perceived but could not climb. She became haughty and proud of her knowledge of music. It was of no use and no consequence. She could not achieve that recognition for which she craved. It was one of those close moments when she blurted out her anguish and frustration.

I wished so much to tell her the painful secret where she was lacking despite all-out effort. But mere telling does not open the floodgates of right perception. There should be an urge, a push, an insistence and a thrust, which creates an itch, a wander-lust to keep a person sufficiently in passion and no-rest, a constant impatience to attain the impossible. So long as a person feels smug and contented in oneself, that phase of seeking any further eludes him. The question is how to induce the quest? Mystics all over the world are agreed that it cannot be induced by command or personal exertion. For it, one has to await the divine signal to ascend. It beats all logic and scientific contention. Science and logic have no answer to this impasse.

One of the greatest mysteries is the revelation of the Holy Korai



It is established that Mohammed was totally illiterate and incapable of uttering the sublime expressions and substance of which the holy Koran is made. His wife, *Khadija* agreed that Mohammed could not make up such refined phrases by himself. There is no other explanation but that Koran was revealed to Mohammed by Providence. The same is claimed by Guru Naniak and his successor Gurus about the revealed word enshrined in the Holy Guru Granth. There are many similar assertions by the prophets of various faiths. Vedas are revealed, created not of human effort but heavenly ordained by Lord Brahma. The Old Testament of the Bible is God's revelation; so are Ahura Mazda and the scriptures of Bahai tradition. The compositions of many poets, writers, musicians and equations of mathematicians and scientists seem to 'descend' to them effortlessly as if a spark is lighted and they merely act as its carriers and bear witness to creativity. A writer wielding a pen, a painter with his brush, a musician with his musical instrument and a thinker with his deep concentration do not attain those master strokes by mere contemplation, hard as they may endeavour. Anybody engaged in creative activity will readily understand this phenomenon, though it may not be conceivable to the common man who considers himself the creator.

#### IV

The motivating push may orbit around personal accomplishment, yet the results of any effort in whatever field, remain less than objective. It smells of trumpeting and artificiality. Masterpieces are not born of such self-centred efforts. Kabir observed it:

*Till the time man is self centred,  
Not a single job is accomplished,  
When he stops harping on the self,  
God consummates the task proficiently.<sup>5</sup>*

This fact was known to the ancient sages in India and was widely recognised. In Mahabharata, the wicked act of publicly disrobing Draupadi continued unabated in spite of her pleadings to all those present, elders and young courtiers, till she gave up her appeals and prayed for Lord's sanctuary to relieve her. This principle is universally admitted by all serious scholars of Divinity. There are references to other mortals who in their innocence prayed for succour and were rewarded. Of course, the ego-centric person neither understands it

nor believes in it. He depends on his prowess of ego, passion, hatred and pride and in greed feels confident of his ability to gain maximum material wealth, more than his needs. He would, perhaps, never feel the need for that spiritual experience. The basic trait is of a general state of harmony and amity, to be at peace with one and all, to have an urge to help and serve whosoever comes. One may say that the two conditions are contradictory. Love which generates such goodwill in a person is not selfish and covetous to rouse passions, but it urges sacrifice to get satiated. By love is not meant necessarily sensual gratification, but to experience a longing to be useful to others. It was one such weird occurrence, which moulded me into finer sensitivity.

A *Shastri* was engaged to give me Hindi lessons at home as I had, like most others in those days prior to the Independence, elected to study Urdu as vernacular at the school and college level. The *Shastri* selected the couplets of Kabir to generate my interest in Hindi. More than lessons in Hindi, we had literary and spiritual bouts about the message of Kabir. The *Shastri* preferred the gloomy and otherworldly drift in Kabir's poetry while I found him very practical and down to earth. The relationship evolved into mutual religious appreciation, though we were poles apart. One day, the *Shastri* confided in me on oath of secrecy that he had made certain occult calculations about my life and had observed that my mother, whom I exceedingly loved and cherished her intellectual refinement, was going to die very shortly. It shook me very much. It was not a matter, in any case, to be divulged to her or others. I sat with her, talked to her keeping the usual stance, but every moment it seemed to me that time was slipping away and I was going to lose my mother any moment. Each conversation or meeting seemed to be the final adieu.

I spent my youth in perpetual dread of losing her and a longing to avert it. Nursing this secret made me lonely and thoughtful. The *Shastri* was, of course, wrong in his calculations and my mother lived to a ripe old age of ninety-three years. But the sword of *Domiciles* kept hanging over me and it was a bittersweet taste in whatever field I performed and achieved. Perhaps, this occult miscalculation totally recast my personality. A man of the world with robust appetites may not want to live his life under such uncanny and creepy shadows. He will also miss out on the emotional and spiritual evolution and development.

## V

Conscience is aroused in a person by unabated selfless love and readiness to suffer and sacrifice personal agenda in the process. It is also a great occurrence to receive love exceedingly and appreciate its depth. There are people who do not know how to respond and acknowledge the immense gift of undemanding love. A person may go on waiting for that happening, a great mystical experience. When it comes to pass, there is a total fulfilment of the soul. It is not the lot of every one. It is Providential Grace, which occurs only in the case of a few. Until it comes about, one may not even understand the meaning of Grace. To have loved and be blessed with love, uninhibited, unreserved, unconstrained, total, without a cause and reason, of being guided and looked after like my mother's whole love, that ensured my growth and gave me a sense of protection. The point is why every body else cannot grasp its significance? For that, one must rip asunder the veil of self-centredness. A senior defence officer was returning from the crematorium after the funeral of his grandmother whom he loved more than his mother. The old lady was, in spite of her advanced years, full of verve and very pleasant. She had the usual problems of her age which did not deter her from enjoying life. We were returning to the city afterwards in my car. He said that he felt relieved as if a big burden was off his shoulders. For many years, he had been nervous and scared, especially when the telephone rang at odd times, because he kept waiting for a call about the passing away of his grandmother whom he loved very much. He would now find peace and sleep well and carry her sweet memories.

## VI

It is not essential, of course, to pass through chilling experiences like I had to endure. The perception of true love can be pleasant, but for that, a person has to develop a personality of finesse and innocence. A shrewd intriguing person cannot reach its sublimity.

There were many speculative theories propounded by the established religions to attract the common folk to the righteous path and to make it a tight ropewalk by one's actions to heaven or hell. There were many escape routes, especially to please the deity by commitment of sins and then recompense it with entreaty and appeasement. These prayers were to melt and soften the gods to one's

lapses and indiscretions without a curative effort to reform the sinner. Prayers had become a necessary tool to erase the sins one continued to commit. Guru Nanak did not subscribe to these rituals and ceremonious routines. It was not for the pleasure of God that one prayed, but to cleanse the self of all transgressions.

He presented God as the Master who had spread a game plan giving people an option to be rid of faults and weak spots to become whole and sublime. Those who understood it got out of the *tri-guna* Maya to win the race; others got entangled in the web of ignorance.

Penance or atonement has no place in this game. One has to face the consequences; there is no escape or getting away from it. The only remedy is to acknowledge the mistakes one makes and honestly shun the evils. As the character emerges out of tribulations duly reformed, discarding bad old habits, one's life style changes to angelic mode, bringing peace and accord with self and society. One is totally emancipated. The Master is ever generous and the old accounts are wiped off and forgiven to such a *gurmukh*. The central theme is that man accomplishes only when God wills it so by bestowing His Grace on him. God benevolently creates a situation so that one finds the perfect teacher to lead him on the way to perfection.

This was a major break-away from the old faiths. It totally changed the face of the quest and its objectivity and terminology. In order to avoid ill-effects of one's misdemeanour it is held essential to, firstly, understand God's game plan, give up one's faults, evil nature and to evolve a strength of character. Such a person proves to be an asset to the society and his environment. He always acts in accordance with God's discipline and spreads harmony and love.

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SIKH DERAS

DALVINDER SINGH*

Dera system among Sikhs in Punjab started with Nirmalas and Udasis. Nirmala and Udasi *deras* were the centres of learning and research on Sikhism and maintenance of Sikh religious institutions. Later, *Gulabdassias* were prominent *dere-dars* as centres of religious teaching. While the Hindus went to temples, the Muslims to mosques, the Sikh learners went to *deras* for learning. Teaching of Sikh scriptures was in Punjabi in Gurmukhi script in these *deras*. The famous folk song '*na main melne padi Gurmukhi na baithi san dere*' depicts the relevance of these *deras*. *Deras* were allotted large lands and properties by various Sikh Maharajas and Chiefs for maintaining *deras* and the religious centers attached to them. Gradually, some *deras* concentrated on acquisition of land, wealth and power. Rather than caring for teaching the religious texts and maintaining the religious centers, they used these establishments for personal aggrandizement. Conflicts arose during transfer of power after the death of a *dera* head. To retrieve the situation and to relieve the Gurdwaras from *dera* control, Singh Sabha Movement launched morchas like *Guru ka Bagh*, *Chabian da Morcha*, *Jaito da Morcha*, etc., and succeeded in taking over control of some of these *deras*. An apex body, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak committee was formed to control Gurdwaras. Some *deras* not holding historical religious places continued while the new ones emerged. These *deras*, however, remained wedded to the teaching of the Gurus, believing in ten Gurus and Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

Later, with the emergence of the Dera Beas, the things changed. Though it drew its teachings from *Gurbani* and remained attached to

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spiritual attainment but it claimed an independent identity. As it did nothing against the value system of the Sikhs and paid due regard to Sikh Gurus, it was not interfered with, even though it weaned away the Sikhs from Sikhism.

Lately, however, some *deras* such as Dera Sacha Sauda, Noormahlias, etc., rose to show up as independent identities, not accepting Sikh Gurus or Guru Granth Sahib as supreme. In fact, they have been trying to raise themselves to the level of Sikh Gurus, while using teachings in Sikh scriptures with no new concept of their own. The political leaders used them to inflate their vote banks. This way they got the political importance they wield now.

Dera Sacha Sauda went to an extreme extent of replicating the holy appearance of the 10th Guru, and performed the ritual of administering *Jaam-e-Insaan* in the same manner and style as was administered by Sri Guru Gobind Singh. His publicizing this blasphemous act widely has been greatly resented by the Sikhs. As regards the antecedents of the present chief of Dera Sacha Sauda, his allegedly criminal background is well known. His act of sacrilege at Salabatpura, too, needs condemnation. His 47 rules published in papers have nothing religious in them. Most of these are general conduct rules taught in any school book but these have a deception plan with some points to bind his followers. For example, point no 34 says, "Always wear this locket to make you remember that we (the photo in the locket is that of Gurmeet Ram Raheem Singh and his guru) are only ones who is your *Malik*. Point No. 35 says, "You got to die for your country and the *Satiguru* (Gurmeet Ram Raheem Singh)". Rule no 6. says, "After getting up in the morning give a call – *dban dban satiguru tera aasra*; (*satiguru* here means Gurmeet Ram Raheem Singh). Rule no. 1 says, "Remove all suffixes like Sharma, Verma, Arora, Sandhu. Write only Insaan." Similarly, according to rule no 15, "15th part of your income should be given in charity or to Shah Satnam Ji Green Welfare Force". This is how he is building his personality cult by obliterating all symbols of other religions forcing people to give their hard-earned income to his Dera. He is allegedly known to have a criminal record. A CBI inquiry report against him for the murder of Ranjit Singh, a former manager, and another of a local reporter as well as of sexual exploitation of *sadhvis*, against him has been placed

before the Punjab & Haryana high Court on 25th May, 2007.

If he is a true saint, he should have apologised for his heinous misdeed of impersonating the tenth Sikh Guru. However, his convoluted apology written in the form of a Dera Press note seeking apology from the tenth Sikh Guru rather than the Khalsa Panth reveals his duplicity, and insincerity.

Similarly, the role of Noormahlias is of similar nature, and is also widely resented. Even declaration of Satiguru by Namdhari chief leader is not acceptable to the Sikhs. These remain the flash points and need to be curbed to avoid any communal tension. Though all the Sikhs agree that these *deras* be curbed but the political patronage given to these *deras* by all the political party leaders is a great cause of concern. SGPC was created to check these *deras*, but it has failed in its role as it has not carried out the required propagation of Sikhism, especially among the poor who are being exploited. Now the stage has reached that the nearly 80% youth in the rural areas have become apostate. It is now often said that times are not far when the Sikhs will lose their base in Punjab. The Sikhs should blame themselves for this, and should not find excuses.

Time has come, when the Sikh clergy rather than following the whims of powers that be should pay attention to *dharmprachar*. They must shed their political robes, and wear the spiritual robes, so that the Sikhs in general get the required religious guidance and solace. The *mayawad* of Gurdwaras must be curbed. The preachers, the *kirtanias* and *granthis* should be dedicated to Sikhism rather than to *maya*. SGPC is not a governmental institution; it is a religious institution. It must refrain from any political affiliation to ensure that the Sikhs from all political systems have equal access to it. It must employ only those who have religious zeal. The religious *karmachari* system must stop forthwith. Their *pracharaks* must perform. Deras have come up because of their failures. It is the Sikhs themselves who have to change and bring in the change. No one will come from outside to help them.

“Hurry up please, it is time

Hurry up please, it is time.”

— T S Eliot

THE SIKHS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM – THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE BRITISH SOCIETY –

ONKAR SINGH*

Sikhism is the world's fifth largest faith and the youngest of world religions with a vibrant global presence of 25 million. Over half a million Sikhs live in the United Kingdom, a democracy of many faiths and cultures, crammed with 60 million people. It's population growth is drawn from immigrants:

The first Sikh immigrants to Britain were the soldier-survivors of the First World War, though most of them came afterwards from the Punjab, after India became independent. They were followed by thousands of Sikhs from East Africa.

They have done remarkably well in the last fifty years in many fields from farming and commerce to engineering, medicine and law. Today, among them are distinguished businessmen, lawyers, judges, doctors and software experts.

An enterprising, resilient and industrious community, they have played a vital role in various professions, business and politics not only in India, their country of origin, but also in countries, which they have made their home. Through hard work, perseverance and honesty, they have made a living for themselves and their families.

In recognition of their contribution to the British society, Prime Minister Tony Blair paid them a glowing tribute on the occasion of the 2003 Vaisakhi celebrations in London. Mr Blair said, "I know that British Sikhs have made a great contribution to the economic, cultural and political life of the United Kingdom, and I firmly believe that your faith and culture have brought tremendous strengths and benefits

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to our society.”

Out of over 150 gurdwaras which dot the skyline of United Kingdom, the city of London has over two dozen, while other big cities like Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol, Nottingham, Wolverhampton, Glasgow, Swindon, Warrington and Kent have several gurdwaras to meet the religious and social needs of the well-established Sikh communities over there.

Southall (West London), famous as “Little Punjab” with a predominant Sikh population is home to over six gurdwaras. One comes across a vibrant Punjabi way of life, a spectacular spread of Indian supermarkets and popular eateries. The gurdwaras are known by denominations such as, Ramgarhias, Namdharis, Sri Guru Singh Sabha and Shiromani Akali Dal. Gurdwaras built on the basis of caste and communities is against the spirit and teachings of the Sikh Gurus, who worked to create a casteless society.

Southall now boasts of a magnificent 4-level newly constructed “Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southall,” the largest gurdwara outside India and Europe. It blends traditional and modern architecture using the latest technology. It has a serene spiritual ambience and grandeur dominating London’s skyline.

Built at a phenomenal cost of 17 million pounds, the ambitious Sikh temple covers a sprawling area of 6000 sq meters with a marble and granite finish and an enormous gilded dome of traditional design which attracts attention from afar. The main congregational prayer hall on the first level can accommodate 2000 worshippers and another 1000 on the level-2 gallery. The vast *langar* (dining) hall on the ground floor provides free meals for a thousand pilgrims daily with a capacity of serving upto 20,000 on festivals.

Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales, paid a royal visit on 13th June, 2003. He praised the Sikh community “for having served this country with great loyalty for hundreds of years, adding to the rich tapestry in Britain.”

Another imposing Sikh shrine is the “Gurdwara Singh Sabha in Hanslow (West London). “From humble beginning, it has become a huge complex of a large marbled prayer hall, dining hall and classrooms, where hundreds of schoolchildren are taught. It’s facilities and

workmanship is something to be admired. The Queen, accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh, paid a royal visit to the gurdwara on 25th October, 2004.

The Sikh *sangat* has generously contributed to the building of these stately Sikh temples to serve the rapidly growing Sikh community in London, offering extensive modern facilities of a library, seminar and community centre for educational, health and welfare services, and sports. As unmissable places of pilgrimage, these gurdwaras serve as a focal point of research and study of Sikh religion in Britain and Europe.

Wherever the Sikhs go to settle and live, they take with them the *Gurbani* (Gurus holy word), the divine hymns (*shabads*) of their Gurus (spiritual Prophets). They have a strong binding of unity and faith in *Gurbani*, a sense of responsibility to contribute to the general good of mankind.

The *Gurbani* deprecates discrimination on grounds of religion and caste by birth. The essence of *Gurbani* is love and respect of all human beings, despite their distinctive religions and beliefs, as they are all equal before the Creator.

□

*He, who does any deed under force or compulsion,
Earns neither any merit nor any obligation on others.
A good and beneficial deed is that
Which is done willingly and with pleasure.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 787

ਬਧਾ ਚਟੀ ਜੇ ਭਰੇ ਨਾ ਗੁਣੁ ਨਾ ਉਪਕਾਰੁ ॥
ਸੇਤੀ ਖੁਸੀ ਸਵਾਰੀਐ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਾਰਜੁ ਸਾਰੁ ॥

A BALLAD OF HOPE

KULBIR KAUR*

A *var* or ode, a heroic measure famous in the Punjab, is often used to rouse the martial spirit in men. The Sikh Gurus took up the measure for the religious purpose. Not surprisingly, there are 22 such Odes in the Guru Granth Sahib, set to 17 different kinds of ragas. *Asa di Var*, one of these odes, meaning a 'ballad of hope', is sung in the Sikh congregation as a morning prayer which evokes a calm mystical mood by creating a blissful and devotional atmosphere.

A composition of Guru Nanak, consisting of *Pauris* (stanzas) and *Shlokas* (staves), *Asa di var* traces the progress of a man from the state of an ordinary man to that of a *Gurmukh*. From passage to passage, the var touches upon several issues, social as well as religious, but the central theme remains. "How to become a spiritual person"? How can a person liberate himself from the bondage of self? How can he unite with the Divine?

The *var* opens with a thanksgiving to the Guru, for he is the perfect one, he is the enlightened one, and he is the only one to show the Path towards salvation.

"I am grateful to my Guru a hundred times a day who has turned men into angels, and that too without delay".

The Guru helps in the shaping of the character by eradicating the evils which are mainly born of egoism. This egoism may be of many kinds but says Guru Nanak, the most dangerous is the religious pride by which man often does evil. Most heinous crimes have been committed in the name of religion. Even Guru Gobind Singh in *Vachitra Natak*, says, "The sins that men do in the name of religion are such that even the greatest sins blush before them."

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In addition to religion, there is the false pride of caste. But the truth is there is only one Supreme Being who fulfills all beings, whether high or low, and whose light reaches down to the lowest orders of this creation. Even an illiterate Sudra is not denied nor is a learned Brahmin immune from the effect of his sins if he leads a wayward life. In the same vein, the Gurus denounce the false ideas of impurity, which was supposed to consist in matter and was contracted from mere touch. He declares that all impurity lies in the heart which is alienated from God.

"They say 'Touch it not! O Touch it not or this food of ours shall be polluted.

Look their bodies are already defiled with their foul deeds.

And their hearts are false even while they rinse their mouths.

Says Nanak, we should worship the Truth;

If we are pure at heart, we shall have it."

There also exists the ordinary pride of position and wealth, which the Guru removes by showing the disciple how to live according to truth. The practice of humility and love are the most effective qualities for keeping people away from sin, far better than mere performance of rituals. God reads our heart and is not won by religious ceremonies, almsgiving or by incurring physical torture to oneself.

In *Asa-di-var*, the Guru praises the role of woman in the family life. Why should she be called low or inferior? It is by women, that we are conceived, and born; it is with her that we are betrothed and married. Why should we call her evil from whom great men are born? All human-beings are equal and worthy of respect.

The disciple is also admonished against rudeness of his fellow-men. By addressing others rudely, a man's mind and appearance lose all its grace. And it is God's function to judge them, not ours.

Some people, in order to avoid these evils, have gone to the other extreme and have sought to kill their individual will, which in fact makes the realization of God impossible. Not the destruction, but the attuning of our will to the supreme will is the only remedy which can be achieved by a life of constant praise of the Almighty, balanced desires and active service. Only love,

humility, mercy and righteousness can save men, to whichever creed, class, religion or gender they may belong. In the world beyond, neither caste nor power will prevail.

The transformation in man occurs only when he submits himself to the supreme will and does good actions since this is the only way to connect man with man, and to connect man with God. Everybody without this force of connection will exist for himself, will live only for himself resulting in moral isolation. In this way, foundation is also laid of a society of the purified, who, as an organized force, strive for the good of the whole mankind.

□

*Even if one were to possess immense wisdom
And were to live in a loving association
With myriads of men;
Without the society of the holy,
There would be no satisfaction;
And without the Name,
There would be pain and misery.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 20

ਲਖ ਸਿਆਣਪ ਜੇ ਕਰੀ ਲਖ ਸਿਉ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਮਿਲਾਪੁ ॥
ਬਿਨੁ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਸਾਧ ਨ ਧ੍ਰਾਪੀਆ ਬਿਨੁ ਨਾਵੈ ਦੁਖ ਸੰਤਾਪੁ ॥

KHALSA RAJ
– AS ENVISAGED BY THE SIKH GURUS AND THE WAY TO
ESTABLISH IT –

RAGHBIR SINGH*

The despotic kings were helped in their ruthless and selfish regimes by the priests whose role was to create a sense of fright in the hearts of innocent people about the wrath of supernatural power(s), which had destined the kings to rule over them. The territory where a king's absolute writ prevailed was called his State. Whenever the people agitated for their rights, the king, in order to create confusion amongst the innocents, termed the agitators as enemies not of him but of the State thereby camouflaging his own personality and interests. Forces paid by the people were used to crush them. To mislead the people further, many thinkers propounded different theories of administration to safeguard the interest of the ruling classes. People's democracy is also the result of such theories. It is a product of complex theoretical/political manipulations by intellectuals of capitalist thinking, who, with a view to share spoils with the rulers as a class, very cunningly introduced the system of government of the people where the masses still remain their victims in the name of the welfare of the State.

The main cause of suffering by the human beings is lack of unity of purpose in them because of the desire for undue personal gains despite the moral teachings to the contrary by various saints. These teachings were in most cases not in tune with the practical requirements of the people. They were of theoretical nature, heavily loaded in favour of some frightening super power beyond the human reach which could be supplicated only by *Karam Kands* or by renouncement of the family and the world with a view to have communion with that power.

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to get relief from the worldly ills. Some pseudo-religious leaders for personal gains divided the humanity into pure and impure sections where the latter were made by such leaders to accept their preordained good or bad luck. Such teachings always remained ineffectual to lead the humanity on right lines. Although there was no division in the Western world on such basis, yet Industrial Revolution there led to the creation of classes on the basis of haves and have-nots, the capitalists and the workers. No stress was ever laid on creating a sense of brotherhood of mankind.

Guru Nanak Dev was the first to realize that unless human brotherhood through friendship with the omniscient power popularly known as God was established, there could be no end to the human miseries. He, therefore, propounded the Sikh Thought where, not the ruthless State but the all-merciful God, is taken to be the Father and owner of all the beings. Amongst other epithets he describes Him as creator of all, fearless, without malice and discrimination and always ready to embrace those who choose to be His friends by imbibing His qualities. Such people are called Khalsa which in Persian means God's property without any intermediary. This way he aimed at constructing a society based on human brotherhood and natural justice where everything is believed to move under the strict Discipline/Will of the Akal Purkh. Within this discipline, every human being has full freedom for action. In Guru Nanak's scheme of things, there remains no need for any State force to defend the discriminatory rulers in the name of State. The Communists, claiming to be the friends of people, floated the idea of a stateless society and Russian Revolution was meant to establish such a society. But it miserably failed in its infancy as it excluded from its agenda the concept of God to which almost everybody in the world looks for succor in time of difficulty. The evolvment of community suitable for Khalsa Raj is exhaustively illustrated in Guru Granth Sahib, the beacon light of human life. Unlike the immorality preached by the capitalist sections through arranged pseudo-religious discourses, print and electronic media, the Gurdwara programmers remind the people of their duties and obligations under natural law by *kirtan*, *shabad vichar* and Sikh *Ithas*.

Sikh *ithas* is the practical application of *Gurbani* which sometime necessitates sacrificing even life to uphold the human values, as Guru

Arjun Dev, Guru Tegh Bhahadur Sahib, Sahibzadas and many of their followers sacrificed. *Gurbani* and Sikh *Ithas* are the main part of curriculum of Khalsa education for building the moral and ethical character of the students to become good and useful members of the world community where they exhibit this character as a role model observing a prescribed *Rehat Maryada* not only individually but collectively too.

Simply reciting *Raj karega Khalsa, Aaki rahe na koe* after every *Ardas* is not enough and *Gurbani* also does not approve of this theoretical exercise alone. Since the necessity for such a *Raj* is being felt all over the world, we have to lay great stress on creating Khalsa free from any superstitions. To produce this Khalsa, our schools need to be headed by competent and outstanding *gursikh* educationists with a dedicated staff. Most of the gurdwaras especially in urban areas and foreign lands have sufficient funds which, instead of being wasted on gurdwara buildings etc. should be utilized for building the character of the people to become Khalsa. Gurdwara managements should feel concerned with the problems of the young and old population around it from going astray from the path of Sikhism so that *sangat* should be able to select from among itself the time-tested institution of five *piaras* to work at various levels of the society to solve its day to day problems. Their decisions both in *Rehat Maryada* and interpretation of *Gurbani*, i.e., rules of life being final have to be accepted by all the concerned without any reservation. Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee of today does not seem capable of improving educational institutions and doing effective Dharam Parchar because of incompetent persons elected as its members. The system of election under the Sikh Gurdwara Act will never allow a useful Committee to come up. To avoid conflict with the law, the Sikh *sangat* of every SGPC constituency should, with the help of its intellectuals nominate competent candidates and ensure their success.

Shri Akal Takht is another institution of great importance in the Sikh ethos. It is the Executive Authority of the Khalsa Raj which has to function through an eminent fearless scholar of *Gurbani* dedicated to uphold the principles of Sikhism. Sarbat Khalsa representing Sikhs in every nook and corner of the world should very carefully select such a Jathedar. Other Takht Jathedars appointed likewise should

constitute a sort of cabinet with Jathedar Akal Takh, as its head. This team should functions collectively under his guidance. If at any stage Sarbat Khalsa feels that any Jathedar is not discharging his duties properly, he could be replaced by another competent person. In foreign countries, five *piaras* would work under the supervision and guidance of the Jathedar Akal Takht. To help the Akal Takht Jathedar in the proper discharge of his duties, Advisory Councils of the International Sikh Confederation on different subjects may be set up.

Sikh Gurdwara Judicial Commission under the Sikh Gurdwara Act is a mere apology for judicial process. There is no place in Sikh Thought for such a Commission. Judicial matters should be entrusted to professionally reputed *Panj Piaras* and the appellate authority should be the Akal Takht. All the Sikhs wherever they are would be governed by this system of Administration. This way Khalsa Raj with headquarters at Amritsar would become the hub of peaceful global administration which is the need of the time.

□

*Be still, my mind !
And you shall not be hurt.
Sing God's praises, my mind !
And you shall merge
In the Supreme Tranquility.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 1113

ਏ ਮਨ ਮੇਰਿਆ ਤੂੰ ਥਿਰੁ ਰਹੁ ਚੋਟ ਨ ਖਾਵਹੀ ਰਾਮ ॥
ਏ ਮਨ ਮੇਰਿਆ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਵਹਿ ਸਹਜਿ ਸਮਾਵਹੀ ਰਾਮ ॥

ON THE ISC FRONT

LT GEN KARTAR SINGH

The Organisers of the ISC meet regularly to discuss ways of spreading our message to members, enrolment of more members, evolving new projects in spheres, such as, Religious and Social Affairs, Legal Affairs, Educational uplift in rural areas of Punjab, identifying needy students with potential for higher education and holding discussions on any points put forth by our Diaspora through E-mails, letters and tele-communication.

EC MEETING HELD ON AUG 8, 2007

While welcoming members of the EC and other attending members Dr Kharak Singh, our Convener, stressed the need to step up ISC activities in all spheres so that we can really contribute towards supporting the activities of our various Sikh Organisations. We would like to enhance their usefulness. He stressed the important roles of our Advisory Councils (ACs), which are constantly acting as think-tanks for Sikh Society and devising projects towards this end. He lauded the role being played by Dr S S Johl, who heads the ACs on Education and Economic Affairs. Dr S S Johl's sterling role as Chairman of the ASSM College at Mukandpur, a rural College, for the last one decade has resulted in the total upliftment of standard of education in the Banga belt of the Nawanshahar District. As a result of his initiative, we too have set up a Coaching Centre at Mukandpur to prepare students of Classes XI and XII for various Competitions for entry into provincial / national professional Colleges and IIT's.

PROGRESS OF GURU NANAK EDUCATION FUND (GNEF)

The ISC had launched the GNEF in Dec. 2006 during the visit of our respected Justice Mota Singh, Queen's Council and Chairman of the AC on Diaspora and Legal Affairs. The GNEF aims at ensuring

that no Sikh deserving student remains deprived of pursuing higher studies due to lack of monetary resources. It also aims at uplifting the level of School and College education in the rural areas of Punjab. This is the need of the hour, as the findings of a panel of educationists highlighted during a seminar held at the IOSS and the ISC. The panel described the situation as alarming and gave a clarion call to the Government through the ISC and also to various Sikh NGO's and Organisations to give their full attention towards finding remedies to this situation most urgently.

COACHING SCHEME AT MUKANDPUR

As a result of the above, the ISC got going and selected Mukandpur as a Coaching Centre. This was of course mooted by Dr S S Johl and quickly researched by the ISC and adopted. Lt Gen Kartar Singh Gill and Col Jagtar Singh Multani, with the generous help received from Dr Atamjit Singh, Principal ASSM College, started the project. Advertisements were sent out along with pamphlets to the surrounding villages for volunteer students who had passed Class X with over 60% marks. As a result, we got 30 students who were keen to join in and also had potential. A majority of them had passed with over 70% marks in the tenth class examination. A search for capable Professors / Teachers was most fruitful and we had the Coaching Centre going in full force by June 17, 2006. This was indeed an achievement. Today after five visits to the Centre, we are indeed proud that the teachers, students and their parents have joined in to set high standards. We, in turn, are acquiring special Coaching syllabus from sister Organisations to raise the standard of coaching. Classes in Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and English which are run for three hours daily, six days a week. This will go on for two years so that students are fully prepared to sit for various competitive examinations with full chances of success.

KHANT MANPUR NEAR MORINDA

A similar scheme has been initiated here as well and we will be able to report its progress in our next newsletter. Response from students is excellent but we are experimenting with the appointment of local School Teachers starting Coaching classes with guidance from the ISC with regard to syllabus to be taught.

THE DERAS ISSUE

We at the ISC are alive to the situation arising from the clash between devoted Sikhs and followers of the Dera Sacha Sauda. We are trying to obtain full information about the major Deras in Punjab with regard to their activities. This will be followed up closely by our AC in Religious Affairs so that the Sikh *sangat* is fully informed about the activities in these *deras*. We find that some *deras*, which have adopted Sikh Maryada in its true form, are an asset to society and need to be guided by an umbrella Sikh organisation. Our efforts will be directed towards achieving this.

THE TURBAN ISSUE

This has certainly been a very disturbing factor, and the ISC and its AC on Diaspora and Legal Affairs with Justice Mota Singh heading it, have been continuously tackling it in various ways. Some of our members such as S Anup Singh, S Gurpreet Singh and Bibi Baljit Kaur have been meeting major Sikh Organisations in the Capital such as the DSGMC and even the Prime Minister. Our HQ has addressed a letter to our Prime Minister in this regard too. We are rather disappointed with the lack of interest shown by our Central Government in treating this as violation of the fundamental rights of the Sikhs. The efforts made in this direction by Sardar M S Rahi are laudable. He is now preparing to appeal to the Supreme Court of India with the financial help from the SGPC and other Sikh Organisations. We wish him success.

CONCLUSION

We are quite sure that all readers of the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies* are now fully convinced that the ISC has not only come to stay, but is gaining strength daily. It is therefore their duty to first join the ISC as members and then spread the word amongst their friends and in their adjoining neighborhood. We desire a wide representation of devoted and educated Sikhs from all walks of life. *Seva* is a word revered in the *Sikh Jagat* the world over. Our Gurus taught us to make life's journey worthwhile by serving others. Then why hesitate – join us and see what wonders we can achieve in setting our house in order. Let us ensure that our next generation holds its head high and is an enlightened lot, who takes pride in following the teachings of our Gurbani and also zealously guards Sikh identity through thick and thin, not forgetting our sacred motto *Sarbat Da Bhalla*. □

THE SIKHS IN BRITAIN (A 150 YEARS OF PHOTOGRAPHS)

A REVIEW BY HARDEV SINGH*

Author : Peter Bance

Publisher: Sutton Publishing Ltd., UK, 2007

Price : £ 18.99 (Hard bound); Pages : 192

Peter Bance (nee Bhupinder Singh) is a young Sikh historian (31 years of age), author of a celebrated book *The Duleep Singh* reviewed by me in *The Sikh Review*. The author is a keen collector of Sikh antiques. The present volume is the fascinating photographic history of the Sikhs and their contribution to British society from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. The author tells the story of the Sikhs from the first arrival in Britain to modern times, illustrated by over 200 photographs drawn from private collections and museums.

The book under review is divided into 9 chapters. In the Introduction, the author traces a brief history of Sikhism and Sikh kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. According to the author, "The first Sikh in Britain, Maharaja Duleep Singh, made a symbolic impact on British society when he arrived in 1854. Looked upon as an adopted son by Queen Victoria, his children became the Queen's godchildren. Since then Sikhs have continued to make an impact, from a tartan Lord Sikh in a Scottish castle, a veteran record-breaking marathon runner (Fauja Singh) to an aspiring international cricket star (Monty Panesar). For more than 150 years Sikhs have been one of the most successful migrant races to settle in Britain."

According to author (p 16) : "There were four significant periods of Sikh migration to Britain. The first was between the world wars,

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organizations is much stronger compared with the poor performance of security forces in these states. The author repeats the same old argument that the Sikhs were a third party during transfer of power by the British, but they were cheated by the Congress leaders. It seems the author supports the thesis of Sirdar Kapoor Singh regarding partition of India.

Chapter 1 deals with the causes and ramifications of the Operation Blue Star. It is mostly a rehash of old facts published in magazines and known to most awakened readers in Punjab. Chapter 2 is repeat of an article published in *The Sikh Review* (June 2003). The author recounts his eye-witness account of the events that took place in Golden Temple complex from 4th to 6th June, 1984. In author's own words: "I always feel that my providential duty to be there at this very sensitive and hectic period of Sikh history was to depict these events as an eyewitness account in writing for the posterity". It makes interesting reading how the author and his comrades fought with Indian military under the command of General Subeg Singh. It is true that Sant Bhindranwala acted as a role model for Sikh youth defending Golden Temple complex during Operation Blue Star, but I fail to appreciate why the author and his comrades ran away from the field of action without facing the bullets in the spirit of true Khalsa!

Chapter 3 recounts the impact of the Operation Blue Star on the Sikh psyche. The author makes a correct assessment: "What happened in Delhi and other places to the Sikhs after Indira Gandhi's assassination, simply added fuel to the already burning fire, and it filled the hearts of the Sikh youth to take revenge". Many young Sikh students ran away from their homes and joined militant ranks during this phase. The author is at his best when he narrates his escapades from Punjab, Calcutta and Ranchi, dodging CID and police following him day and night. On page 31, the author remarks: "Sikhs everywhere in the world were first shaken by the attack on Golden Temple and then after assassination of Indra Gandhi, by their massacre. The Sikhs came to know that they were slaves in India. But how to break the chains of this slavery? This appeared to be a million dollar question."

In the next three chapters, the author takes a detour and recounts his interactions with militant leaders of North-East, namely, Assam and Nagaland. The author seems to enjoy a good rapport with these

militant organizations and he has a word of praise for AASU (page 41). "Compared to the Sikhs, the N-E people may not be as brave but they are more informed and highly educated, and have international knowledge about the politics and movements going on."

I highly appreciate the role played by the author to bring Sikh militants under the political leadership of Simranjit Singh Mann. I endorse his viewpoint that Mann was riding the crest of popularity in Punjab after winning December 1989 elections to Parliament. Prakash Singh Badal and his Akali Dal were reduced to non-entity in Sikh politics. Mr Mann frittered away his energies by meddling in non-issues like wearing a long Kirpan in Parliament House. The author narrates how Mr. Mann panicked and failed to muster enough moral courage to accept his proposal to become legitimate political leader of the Sikh militant organizations. On page 38, the author laments : "I have not yet found any logic behind his (Mann's) act of refusal to take command of the Sikh militant organizations. He also squandered chances to become Chief Minister of Punjab and of rehabilitation of the militants, and the history of Punjab and the Sikhs would have been different now."

Despite a long list of mis-spelt words given in corrigendum, I advise the author to get his story checked and corrected by a subject expert for removing the flaws in his English version. No reviewer will take the trouble of recording mistakes and howlers found almost on every page of the book.

□

*A wise person discourses
After he knows the primary object,
And befriends only his likes.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 148

ਮੂਲੁ ਜਾਣਿ ਗਲਾ ਕਰੇ ਹਾਣਿ ਲਾਏ ਹਾਣੁ ॥

REVIEWS

OPERATION BLUE STAR – A HOLY WAR OF THE SIKHS –

A REVIEW BY HARDEV SINGH*

Author & Publisher : Dr Bhagwan Singh Mokel

Price : Rs 75 ; Pages : 80

Revised Edition : 2006

The book under review is a collection of some essays published by the author in *The Sikh Review* and other magazines. It is a strange mix of 3 essays on Operation Blue Star and the remaining 3, on a 'Peep into the North-East'. Perhaps, the author wants to highlight his contribution of starting a dialogue between Sikh Students Federation and the Militant organizations of North-East. The 6 essays are followed by 4 Appendices. There have been about half a dozen books on Operation Blue Star by some learned authors in both English and Punjabi. The only justification for this booklet may be author's claim of being an eye-witness to the Operation Blue Star in the capacity of a close confidant of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala. My only motivation in reviewing this book is that I know some of the key-players who participated in the action along with Bhagwan Singh.

In the Introduction, the author pleads the case of Dalits and other minorities who are facing a threat from Hindutva forces let loose during the rule of BJP from 1999 to 2004. He compares BJP policies to the Nazi policies of the Second World War time. The author considers position of India's national integration as very alarming in face of threats posed by various militant organisations operating from Assam right upto Tamilnadu. The recent events in Jharkhand and

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consisting of enterprising businessmen, students and pedlars. The second was after Indian independence in 1947 when significant numbers of young labourers came to fill the gap in the labour market from Punjab. The third phase saw the greatest number of Sikhs arrive via chain migration and from former British Colonies. The fourth was predominately from East Africa, after expulsion from Uganda in the 1970s. By 2001, over 3,36,000 Sikhs had made Britain their home."

Chapter 1 covers the period from 1854 to 1900 and traces the history of Maharaja Duleep Singh and his family. It vividly describes the roles played by Maharani Jind Kaur, Sardar Aroor Singh and Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhawalia in bringing back Duleep Singh into the Sikh fold. He appointed Thakur Singh, Prime Minister-in-exile, to regain his lost empire, but the British were too tactful to allow his conspiracy to succeed. My review of *'Maharaja's Box'* by Christy Campbell describes the adventures of Maharaja Duleep Singh along with his frustrations. It is heartening to note that Sardar Balwant Singh Grewal was the first commoner Sikh student who reached London in 1894 to study law at Lincoln's Inn. Since Balwant Singh, a total of eleven members of Grewal family became practising lawyers educated in Britain. Some of the photographs show Sikh officers at Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee celebrated in London during 1887. We also see Bhai Ram Singh, a Ramgarhia Sikh from Amritsar, who was invited to design the Durbar Room at Osborne House for Queen Victoria. Bhai Ram Singh reinvented modern Sikh architecture, of which one of the best examples is the Khalsa College, Amritsar.

Chapter 2 describes the visits of members of the royalty, particularly of the ruling houses of Patiala, Kapurthala, Nabha and Jind. Maharaja Jagatjit Singh of Kapurthala made several visits to Britain on his way to USA and Europe. Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala was the most famous of all Indian Maharajas to grace Britain with his presence. The famous *'Patiala Necklace'*, one of the most expensive pieces of jewellery ever made, was created for him by the house of Cartier in 1928. Besides his passions for beautiful women and sparkling gems, Maharaja's addiction to the prestigious Rolls-Royce Motor car practically kept the firm in business. In his garage at Moti Bagh, Patiala, the Maharaja had 44 Rolls-Royces, all specially built for him. During his 1911 visit, the Maharaja was approached by Khalsa

Jatha Members to set up a Gurdwara in London. He donated £ 1000 on the spot and performed the opening ceremony of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh Dharamsala at # 79 Sinclair Road, London. This became the nucleus of first Gurdwara in Britain.

Chapter 3 is devoted to the exploits of Sikh troops of the British Indian Army who fought for the British and their Allies during First and Second world wars. The photographs show Princess Sophia Duleep Singh nursing wounded Indian soldiers at a convalescence camp in 1917. Sikh soldiers from Punjab wrote back memories of grand daughter of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Sikh soldiers were always fighting in front rows as Vanguard and the British army in the Second Line of defence. As a consequence, thousands of Sikh soldiers were killed or maimed in action. Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala visited his forces in action to inspire them in the capacity of Major-General of British Indian army. The two memorable photographs of this chapter represent Hardit Singh Malik CIE, OBE, ICS in London (1918) and Squadron Leader Mohinder Singh Pujji of the RAF, London (1940). Both of them fought against the Germans and won laurels during the first and second world wars, respectively.

Chapter 4 is devoted to early Sikh pedlars who migrated to Britain during 1930s. They filled the vacuum created by the migration of Jewish pedlars from Europe to USA. Sikh pedlars mostly belonged to Bhatra sect who maintained their Sikh identity intact even under adverse circumstances. Lodging houses were set up in East End of London to accommodate pedlars and other new migrants from India. The most exciting photograph appears at page 74 of the book, where Shaheed Udham Singh is shown being escorted from Caxton Hall by Scotland yard police after he shot dead Sir Michael O' Dwyer on 13th March, 1940.

Chapter 5 relates to the migration of Indian labour after 1947. The British market needed labour, and immigration laws were liberal, so many families from Punjab (doaba area) sought refuge in Britain. Photograph at page 89 shows Master Tara Singh in a Manchester Gurdwara. He went to raise funds and canvass support for the forthcoming SGPC election in Punjab. Master Akali Dal won a thumping majority by winning 126 of the 130 seats in the election and Congress sponsored party was routed. By 1946, there were 20 Indian

restaurants in London and in 1947, Gurbachan Singh's Punjab Restaurant was founded. It is still being run by one of his grandsons. The chapter describes the working Sikhs' plight and their movement to Southall after the East End, London. At present, Southall is the hub of activity of Sikh Diaspora in London, and you will miss a chance to locate a white man in this locality.

The author records Narinder Singh Kapany, father of fibre optics in the world, working in his research laboratory at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London. Another photograph on page 93 shows the couple (Narinder and Satinder) after the wedding ceremony solemnised in London according to the Sikh rites in 1954. There are some other photographs of Sikh marriages in this chapter.

Chapter 6 narrates the heroic deeds of Sikh struggle. The right to wear turban at the workplace was denied to Sikhs in Britain. Sundar Singh Sagar spearheaded the struggle for wearing turban on the Manchester buses while on duty as a driver or a conductor. Ultimately, the Sikhs won their battles in almost all big cities. As a consequence, the Sikhs were allowed to wear their turbans while on duty in buses, trains and even police force. The chapter includes a photograph depicting the weapons of Guru Gobind Singh displayed at the India House, London, before these were brought to India as relics of Tenth Guru.

Chapter 7 gives the history of Sikh Gurdwaras in Britain. The author gives full credit to Sant Teja Singh, who was instrumental in setting up first Sikh Gurdwara (Maharaja Bhupinder Singh Dharamsala) in London. As a young student, Teja Singh became a role model for other Sikh students in Cambridge to keep the Sikh identity intact. He was acting as a Sikh missionary while losing some precious years at Cambridge. Teja Singh founded the Khalsa Jatha British Isles in Cambridge during 1908, paving the way for establishment of first Sikh Gurdwara in London. Ramgarhia Sikhs from East Africa formed the Ramgarhia Sabha Southall in the 1960s and built their own Gurdwara. Gurdwaras were built in all big and small cities of Britain to cater to the needs of growing Sikh *sangats*. London has nearly one dozen Gurdwaras at present.

The last two chapters describe the impact of Sikhs on the social and cultural life of the Britain. Turbaned Sikhs began riding motorbikes

after winning Turban - Helmet case in favour of Turban. The Sikhs started participating in local and national politics. The Sikh musical bands put Punjabi music on international map. Author has given some space to the proponents of Khalistan movement in England, showing Dr Jagjit Singh addressing crowds at London's Hyde Park in 1984. With UK Sikh population of about 3,50,000, Sikhs have diversified into every field and industry in Britain. Thus, the Sikhs have proved themselves a worthy and successful community in Britain. All those achievements are depicted by photographs by the versatile author. The Sikhs have come of age in Britain, and find a niche in all walks of life. The last photograph shows Monty Panesar, the star cricketer of England, a role model for Sikh youth of Britain.

The author deserves appreciation of Sikhs all over the globe for bringing out a pictorial biography of the Sikhs in Britain. Some of the observations made by the author are remarkable. For example, the photograph on page 121 shows a mixed gathering of English men and Sikhs in Gurdwara during 1930s. Due to lack of preaching about Sikhism, we have only the presence of Sikh *sangat* in our Gurdwaras now. On page 121 & 122, Sikh *bibis* are shown acting as priests in Gurdwara. The only other example I witnessed was in Rangoon Gurdwara of Myanmar. Our SGPC has to learn a lesson to give equal rights to Sikh women in the Gurdwara services at all levels. During the Second World War when ration system was introduced in Britain, Sikh Gurdwara in Birmingham was serving *langar* for 3 days per week to the needy.

I must point out some serious mistakes that have crept into the text. On page 12 (caption of the top photo), it is wrongly mentioned that Golden Temple was built by the fifth guru, Guru Angad when it should be Guru Arjun Dev. In Chapter 3 (p 45, 4th para), I guess battle of Brittany (France) is written as battle of Britain. In chapter 5 (p 78, 3rd line from top), it should be border of West (not East) Pakistan, running through Punjab.

NANAK PARKASH VOL II

A REVIEW BY SURJIT SINGH*

Editor : Dr Kirpal Singh

Publisher: SGPC, Amritsar

Price :165/-; Pages : 891

The present world is no more a vast expanse hard to traverse and hardly unamenable to communication. This has happened due to the impact of revolution in transportation and information technology. The altered scenario has enabled people of different civilizations and cultural structures to get together and interact with one another comfortably. In the process, the scrutiny and appraisal of different ideologies or thought-patterns is bound to take place. For any pattern, whether it is religious or political or social, it is imperative that it should be understood and projected properly.

As a result, the religions the impact of which is widespread, as for instance, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Jainism and Sikhism, are more likely to be subjected to screening and scrutiny. The greatest indication is the increasing tendency to organize inter-faith seminars or debates all over the world.

Fully aware of this fact, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, the apex religious body of the Sikhs, has focussed on the sources of Sikh history and Sikh religion to get these properly evaluated so that while analysing of the concepts and history of the Sikhs, spurious and irrelevant matter does not distort or smudge it.

For the successful accomplishment of its much cherished objective, it has requisitioned the services of Dr Kirpal Singh, a renowned historian, who is credited with having analysed nearly two

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dozen groundbreaking dissertations.

To start with, he took up the task of scrutinizing and editing *Sri Guru Nanak Parkash*, which was authored by Bhai Santokh Singh, which subsequently formed the most prominent part of his magnum opus, *Sri Gur Partap Suraj Granth*. The learned editor is all praise for Bhai ji for his erudition, and his vast knowledge of Vedantic philosophy, Puranic literature, ancient Indian lore, different cultural patterns, historical traditions, and whims and vanities of people of diverse races, especially of those who lived in the north western part of the sub-continent of India.

He also took note of Bhai ji's firm faith in Guru Nanak and his ideology which provide dynamical push to his creative genius to blossom and exude fragrance. Having prepared the manuscript of *Sri Gurpartap Suraj Granth*, he presented it to Sri Akal Takht (1843-44) as his offering like a humble Sikh. Soon after he breathed his last. The impression went around that perhaps his life was so customized that it was not to endure after his task of preparing the Granth had been accomplished.

The editor's incisive skill took no time to identify that Bhai Santokh Singh, being a votary of Nirmala Panth, approached Sikh religion like a Vedantist and, no wonder, *Sri Gur Nanak Parkash* is replete with a plethora of references from Vedantic literature, and Puranic lore. The text of *Sri Gur Nanak Parkash* likewise incorporated many aspects of Brahminical ritual system.

According to Bhai Vir Singh, this was due to the influence of the Brahmin scholars whom Bhai ji had called upon to assist him in his work. The editor, however, holds a different opinion. According to him many other factors besides his association with Brahmin scholars at the court of the rulers of Patiala, Nabha and Kaithal, his reluctance to break the literary traditional shackles also influenced his version. One such factor was his penchant to present Guru Nanak and his successors taller than any of the prophets of yore or of present, especially those of the Hindus.

The editor fully recognizes the poetic acumen of Bhai ji and his high-profile verses of *Sri Gur Nanak Parkash* which are marked for their immaculacy, appropriate usage of meters, allegories, symbols, metaphors, their lucidity, profundity and clarity.

The edited text of the book in hand is the second half of *Sri Guru Nanak Parkash Purbaradh* comprising thirty six chapters beginning with the thirty eighth chapter and culminating at seventy three. Out of the thirty six chapters, chapters numbered 52, 65, 66, 67, 68, 70, 71, 72 have been edited out to be placed after chapter seventy three as the appendices text also carries Punjabi translation verse by verse in prose. To each chapter are appended footnotes and references to lend clarity and to bring out the depth of the contents.

The rearrangement of the chapters was done without altering the titles and numbers of the chapters. The chapters, contents of which seemed far-fetched, totally mythological or unhistorical or speculative or unconnected with the life of Guru Nanak, were placed at the end of the book as appendices. The purpose of the editor seems to be to keep the original work intact, although in a different form, to enable the readers to assess its historical value themselves.

The editor's main purpose, as he himself admits in the Preface to the text, is to identify historical Guru Nanak in the work. In the process, he scrutinizes the whole gamut of events embodied in the work and finds no difficulty in recognizing that the author's primary source of information is Bhai Bala's *Janamsakhi* a copy of which bearing year 1658 CE was available to him. He also seems to have consulted *Janamsakhi* by Bhai Mani Singh and *Vaars* of Bhai Gurdas though only casually or marginally.

Since Bhai Bala's *Janamsakhi* was compiled at the behest of Bidhi Chand, a scion of Baba Handal and leader of a rival sect of Hindalias, who was intent on denigrating Guru Nanak Dev in comparison to Handal, its narration was full of blemishes, exaggerations and fantasies.

Bhai ji was aware of the shortcomings of this *Janamsakhi*; yet he had to use it extensively, because no other source-material, worthy of trust, was available to him. According to the learned editor, he seemed even wary of utilizing its material; but even his caution was tempered with certain notions and beliefs, because of his nourishment in Puranic and mythological literature.

The result was that *Sri Gur Nanak Parkash* included such material which is historically unacceptable, religiously outlandish and palpably tangential to the main focus of the text. The text instead of presenting Guru Nanak in the right perspective, turned out to be a mix of history,

mythology, Puranic legends, Brahminical notions of rituals and practices.

While detailing the itineraries of Guru Nanak to different places in India or abroad, Bhai ji seems to be ignorant of their correct geographical locations. The narration also betrays his paucity of knowledge of routes. At places in the text, we come across such facts, as are purely fanciful and unbelievable. For instance, in one of the chapters, it is said that the Guru while crossing a vast expanse of Arabian Sea walked on the back of a fish which had a span of 35 *kos* (nearly 43 miles). The fact is at best a conjecture, pure and simple, absolutely unrelated to reality. Besides, the places visited during Guru Nanak's travels are not recorded either chronologically or location wise. For instance, the Guru is shown visiting SANGLA Deep immediately after visiting Kamrup, from Sangladip to Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh and from Medina to Sultanpur (in Punjab). It looks absurd, for Guru Nanak could not reach Kamrup straight from Talwandi (modern Nankana Sahib) or from Kamrup to Sangladip without sojourning en route, given the state of transport facilities available during that period. Moreover, the Guru was shown flying from one place to the other while traversing long distances rather than using available means of transportation such as ships, horses or elephants which show Bhai ji's lack of awareness of even the contemporary means of transportation. Even the details of most of the events are either exaggerated or beyond the limits of historical imagination. These are overloaded with mythologies, miracles or untruths.

It is well known that Sikhism does not believe in miracles and considers these violative of cosmic law and spirituality. Bhai Ji, on the other hand, assigns miracles to the Guru without any reservation, taking little care of the fact that such an act would popularise the image of Guru Nanak among the laity and that too temporarily, besides causing aberrations in the Sikh principle.

Similarly Bhai ji used Puranic and mythological notions and stories not as an aid to comprehend and highlight a situation or a personality as it had been done in Adi Granth but as an absolute truth, thereby attaching either purposely or accidentally such a material with the Guru's personality which has never found acceptance in the religion of Guru Nanak.

Despite different shortcomings inscribed in the foregoing paragraphs Bhai ji's *Sri Guru Nanak Parkash Part II* still holds an important position in historical literature. It is difficult to spot such historical facts which can be a rare aid in assimilating certain aspects of Guru Nanak's life.

The account of Guru's visit to Ceylon, Mecca, Sayyidpur approximates to the modern researches. Similarly his account of conversation of the Guru with the Sidhas, the term used generically for *yogis* and *sanyasis*, has been beautifully covered in the text, specially that part which concerns the polemical discussion about the nature of reality, its relation with world and the role of *shabad* in the process of self-realisation.

Bhai ji, however, did not take care of the chronology of the life spans of Yogis to determine which of the yogis Gorakh Nath, Machhandar, Loharipa, Kanifa, Bhurvei, Gopi Chand, Mangal *et al* whom the Guru met, were the contemporaries of Guru Nanak. This is a glaring historical travesty.

Possibly, according to the Editor, the Sidhas / Yogis with whom the Guru entered into dialogue, had assumed the names of their respective masters in order to emphasize that there was unity of thought between them and other masters, following the examples of the heads of different Sufi *silsilahs* in the medieval Punjab who preferred to be known by the name of their founder of the *silsala*.

By preparing the edited text of *Sri Guru Nanak Parkash*, Dr Kirpal Singh has done a unique job. Now the readers/devotees would read or study the text not as a sacred object as it has been a wont with them till now, but as a text overflowing with devotion for the Guru as well as a text replete with aberrations, tangential facts, and even anti-Sikh material. For such a critical work, the editor deserves approbation.

BETRAYED & ROBBED !*

A REVIEW BY GURMUKH SINGH

Title : Maharaja Dalip Singh Cheated Out

Author : Sardar Avtar Singh Gill

Publisher : Jaswant Printers

Pages : 256

Price : Rs 300/-

BETRAYED by his own, and robbed by colonial Britain. The extent of betrayal was mind-numbing, while the scale of the shameful robbery, as yet to be admitted by the British Government, unprecedented. That is the true story of Maharaja Dalip Singh son of the Lion of Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, as told by Sardar Avtar Singh Gill in his book "*Maharaja Dalip Singh Cheated Out*".

This is the last book in the series covering mostly the period following the demise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh on June 27, 1839. This historical record, remarkable for its wealth of detail based on original documents, and vivid descriptions of the most important episodes in the life of Maharaja Dalip Singh, makes essential reading for the research student of Sikh history.

Stripped of all that he inherited, wrote the Maharaja in 1882. "... and finding only a helpless child to deal with, the temptation being too strong, Lord Dalhousie annexed the Punjab, and instead of carrying out the solemn contract entered into by the British Government at Bhyrowal, sold almost all my personal as well as all my private property, consisting of jewels, gold and silver plate, even some of my wearing apparel and household furniture ... "(Letter of 31 August, 1882 published by *The Times* in London.)

Other publications in the same series by S Avtar Singh, a retired

* Coutresy : *The Sikh Times*, July 12, 2007

judge, are: "*Badnasib Maharaja Dalip Singh*" (Panjabi), "*Lahore Darbar and Rani Jindan*", "*Maharaja and the Koh-i-Noor*", and "*Blood Bath After Ranjit Singh*". This last publication, "*Maharaja Dalip Singh Cheated Out*" with a Foreword by S S Johal, former Vice-Chancellor, Punjabi University, Patiala, starts with the revolt forced on Diwan Mulraj, the Governor of Multan, by the British, who at the time were the self-appointed gamekeepers, but acted subsequently more like poachers. The Treaty of Bhyrowal of 16 December 1846 gave the British Resident at Lahore- "full authority to direct and control all matters in every Department of the state The Council of Regency was but a set of puppets removable at pleasure". The British became the sole guardian of the person and property of the infant Maharaja Dalip Singh, and of course took both including the famous Kohi-i-noor."

With his legal training, S. Gill knows the difference between evidence, hearsay and fiction. Documentary evidence shows that annexation of Punjab on 29 March 1849 was premeditated and systematically plotted by Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General of India.

Born on 4 September 1838, Dalip Singh sat on the throne on 17 September 1843 at the age of five, and died in Paris on 22 October 1893. It is unlikely that any previous publication has given such a detailed and clear account of the Maharaja's last few days. None of his children were by his side when his soul departed from an unconscious body. The book concludes by giving fairly detailed information about the Maharaja's children. The last survivor of his family princess Bamba Dalip Singh died on 10 March 1957 at Lahore.

This is a story of disloyalty, treachery, shameful betrayal of trust, conspiracies and plots, grisly murders of own kith and kin in cold blood. Even children were not spared by their own relatives. The murders started with Dhian Singh Dogra killing Chet Singh Bajwa, an adviser of Maharaja Kharak Singh in front of and despite the pleadings of the Maharaja on the night of 8/9 October 1839. Then followed the "Bloodbath after Ranjit Singh". Lehna Singh Sandhawalia cut off the head of young Kanwar Partap Singh on 15 September 1843. Maharaja Dalip Singh's own maternal uncle, Prime Minister Jawahar Singh Aulakh, was killed in front of his sister Maharani Jindan and the 7 years old Maharaja Dalip Singh on 21 September. It is not surprising that the young Maharaja developed a fear and distrust of, and dislike

for, his own people, which he was able to overcome only much later in adulthood. The frightened, Maharaja did not require much persuasion to surrender his throne, convert to Christianity and become a helpless "pensioner" of colonial Britain. It was also not too difficult for the British to make him part with the *Koh-i-noor* once he was in their clutches in England.

The Maharaja was taken away from his mother Maharani Jindan when he was only eight years old.

The second Anglo-Sikh war came to an end in March 1849 and Punjab was annexed on 29 March 1849. Acting for the Governor General of India, Lord Dalhousie, Sir Henry Meirs Elliot held a Darbar at Lahore on 29 March 1849 declaring that "henceforth the sovereignty of the Punjab was assumed by the British." This hurried and "farcical transaction" robbed Punjab of its sovereignty and made its ruler, Maharaja Dalip Singh a "throneless Pensioner" of the British Government.

The Political and religious members who made up the Council of Regency to look after Maharaja Dalip Singh's interest, unashamedly fell over each other to betray the trust placed in them and to grab whatever was offered to them by the British.

The destiny of the ruling Maharaja, his twenty million subjects, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims and the questions of the dissolution of the Sikh Kingdom and the confiscation of its property including the world-famous gem *Koh-i-noor*, were thus finally decided and agreed upon by four of the selfish Councillors, within a short space of two hours.

The following two quotations from non-Sikh resources illustrate the treacherous behaviour of colonial administrators. From John Sullivan "This is perhaps the first instance on record in which a guardian has visited his own misdeeds upon his ward." And from M Ludlow's, *In British India*, "Fancy, if you can, a widow lady with a house full of mutinous servants, who turn out and attack the police. The police knock them on the head, walk into the house and kindly volunteer to protect the mistress against any violence on their part. A quarrel again breaks out, the truncheons are again successful, and the inspector now politely informs the lady that her house and the estate on which it stands are no longer her own, but will be retained in fee simple by

the police; that on turning out, she will receive an annuity, equal to about one and six pence in the pound of her rental and that she must hand over for use of the Chief Commissioner her best diamond necklace."

Thus, "The Governor General, true to his words and deeds, violated Treaties, abused a sacred trust ... and made an acquisition as unjust as it was imprudent..."

Despite some typos, the book is well written; so that, once started, the reader finds it difficult to put it down. In fact, while all the books in this series are well researched and make gripping reading, each book is an improvement in style and flow on the previous. However, the author is perhaps too lenient towards the Sikh rulers and the Sikh regime. It is clear that unlike the British rule even in those colonial days, the Sikh kingdom was not held together by any code of practice, constitution, or underlying principles, which disciplined the administrators and made them accountable to the people. There is no mention of any constitutional or legal code capable of holding the "Khalsa raj" together through uniform application of rules and regulations.

Despite their appearance, most of the "Sikh" Sardars, rajas and even maharajas knew very little about Sikh ideology and institutions. They did not subscribe to nor were they bound by any theo-social or theo-political ideals of the Khalsa. The Khalsa institutions set up during the Guru period and further developed during the 18th Century Sikh struggle for survival had been allowed to lapse by Maharaj Ranjit Singh, himself too busy building and holding together his empire. It may be argued that the communal harmony in the Maharaja's regime resulted more from the Maharaja's desire to keep the rajas and *jagirdars* of all faiths happy and on his side through incentives, *jagirs* and *rajaships etc* than any practical implementation in a structured way of the egalitarian Khalsa principles. Lord Dalhousie's agent, Henry M Elliot, was misled by the prevailing unSikh practices into believing that places like Ganges and Hardwar were places of "high sanctity" in the Sikh religion! The ignorance of the illiterate Sardars was appalling. It is revealed by their ignorance of the geographical locations of even the most famous places in India.

The reader is compelled to express-regret regarding Queen

Victoria's role. Was the great Queen of the British Empire so powerless as not to be able to do anything about the great injustice done to the Maharaja and the pain and anguish he was going through? It is not as if she was not aware of what was going on. On hearing about the Maharaj's death she wrote to II Prince Victor Dalip Singh (then 27) from Balmoral "He [Maharaja Dalip Singh] was so handsome, so charming. But I will not dwell on the few after years which followed which were so painful. It is however a great comfort and satisfaction to me that I saw the Maharaja two years and half ago at Grasse and that all was made up between us ... I shall always..... the deepest interest in the welfare and the happiness of yourself and your Brothers and Sisters. Believe me always your friend and Godmother. Victoria R I." Hollow words from the British Queen in deed!



*The lamp of life is lit
By putting the oil of wisdom,
(gathered from sacred books)
And a wick of the fear of God into our body;
And lighting it then
With the fire of true knowledge.
Its light will lead one to the Lord.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 26

ਪੋਥੀ ਪੁਰਾਣ ਕਮਾਈਐ ॥
ਭਉ ਵਟੀ ਇਤੁ ਤਨਿ ਪਾਈਐ ॥
ਸਚੁ ਬੂਝਣੁ ਆਣਿ ਜਲਾਈਐ ॥
ਇਹੁ ਤੇਲੁ ਦੀਵਾ ਇਉ ਜਲੈ ॥
ਕਰਿ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਤਉ ਮਿਲੈ ॥

NEWS & VIEWS

PRESIDENT OF INSTITUTE OF SIKH STUDIES VISITS USA

Recently, Bhai Ashok Singh Bagrian, President, Institute of Sikh Studies, visited USA and held wide-ranging discussions with diaspora Sikhs on Panthic issues. Here are a few excerpts from his report :

This summer I had an opportunity to visit some Gurdwaras in USA, where I interacted with their managements and *sangats*.

First Gurdwara was Plymouth at Detroit, where the main point under discussion was the Sacha Sauda happening. It was nice to note that *sangat* was up-to-date with the happenings in Punjab.

As I had attended the May 17, 2007 meeting on this issue, called by Akal Takht Sahib, I was able to provide details of the incident.

Here I took the opportunity to introduce the idea of an international body that can act as a meeting and rallying point for the Sikhs all over the world, since the Sikhs abroad, as of now, have no say in the decisions taken in Punjab.

Then I gave them the Constitution of International Sikh Confederation. They studied it and had further discussions with me. One gentleman who had retired from AIR invited me and some other members at his home, where Panthic matters were further discussed at a dinner. They appreciated our efforts towards creating the International Sikh Confederation (ISC). They were quite familiar with Institute of Sikh Studies (IOSS). They assured me that they will take up the matter in their meeting of Management, and get back to us.

Next week, I visited Gurdwara Gobind Singh Foundation, Washington. Here, Bibi Amrit Kaur, a relation of Late Major Agyapal Singh, is the secretary who is well informed about the activities of the IOSS. While introducing me to the *sangat*, she explained to them IOSS'

various activities.

In San Francisco, Dr Sukhmandar Singh had already been in touch with members of our community there. We had two very fruitful meetings. Our ISC member, Sardar J S Sodhi was already there working with Dr Sukhmandar Singh. Members of the Management of Freemont Gurdwara offered to hold subsequent meetings with our members. Sardar Ranbir Singh of World Sikh Council also joined our deliberations. A local Committee of the following was mooted :

Dr Sukhmandar Singh, Convener

S Ram Singh, Freemont Gurdwara

S Manmohan Singh

S Manohar Singh Grewal

S Ranbir Singh

S Kulwant Singh Chicago

S Harbhajan Singh

At El Sabranto Gurdwara, where the President, Dr J P Singh is from Patiala, he and his colleagues assured me that they would keep in touch with Dr Sukhmandar Singh and do whatever is required. Gurdwara Management seemed to be under the influence of Chowk Mehta.

I found that a big chasm exists between our new educated generation and the gurdwaras in USA. Gurdwaras are managed in the old style, which does not attract the new generation. But these boys, on their own, have formed small groups where they get together and exchange views.

One incident shows the difference. In one school, there was a case where a Sikh boy was jeered at due to his *jura* and *patka*. The old guard wanted to go and hold protest outside the school, whereas the parents of the boy wanted to talk and discuss the issue with the Management. The parents' meeting not only defused the situation but also the school management thanked the parents for making them wiser on Sikh sentiments. To top it, the boy was asked to show his fellow students how *kesar* are combed, *jura* made and *patka* tied.

There was also resentment amongst a section of Sikhs that no memorial has been built in Darbar Sahib complex in memory of the innocent pilgrims killed during Blue Star. They wanted Institute of Sikh Studies to take up the issue with the concerned authorities.

In London, I had an opportunity to meet Justice Mota Singh Ji and to interact with the local *sangat*.

One significant thing that I came to know was that a new gurdwara has been built by Sikhs who have shifted from Afghanistan. If any Sikh desires to start a new business venture, finance is made available from *Golak* money. These Sikhs have shown a way how *Golak* money

can be used for the betterment of our community.

~ ~ ~

COMMUTE DEATH SENTENCE TO LIFE TERM

Chandigarh, August 10. The Institute of Sikh Studies expressed its serious concern over the death sentence awarded to Sardar Jagtar Singh Hawara and Sardar Balwant Singh in the Beant Singh murder case, in a Press Note, dated August 10, 2007, reproduced below:

PRESS NOTE

Universal declaration of human rights advocates abolition of capital punishment. This flows from the philosophy that the purpose of a judicial sentence is not retribution but prevention and reform. Death closes the door on reform. With the exception of the UK, no other European country retains the death penalty. Abolition of capital punishment may be considered the mark of a progressive, modern state.

More than 200 years ago, during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, no criminal, whatsoever his crime, was awarded capital punishment. 21st century India must likewise abolish the death penalty.

During the last week, several death sentences have been handed down in two very high profile cases, namely, the 1993 Mumbai blast case and the 1995 Beant Singh assassination case. This is an opportune time to think whether or not India should retain the death penalty. Without reference to the nature of the crime, the Movement Against State Repression and Punjab Human Rights Organisation urges that higher courts should set aside these death penalties and commute them to life sentences. Fourteen years is the duration of a life sentence and the convicts have already been behind bars for 10 to 11 years.

Akal Takht Jathedar, Joginder Singh Vedanti, has characterized the convicted men as 'swayed by extreme emotion which was provoked by the excesses perpetrated by the state on the Sikhs of Punjab'. It is well known that the government led by the late Beant Singh actively encouraged the Punjab Police, led at that time by KPS Gill, to murder in cold blood any citizen suspected of sympathizing with the cause of Khalistan. The rule of law did not operate in that era. There are persons whose hands are covered with the blood of far more men than the hands of Hawara and Balwant Singh, but these persons have never been brought to justice, rather they have been rewarded and extolled with encomiums such as 'super cop', etc.

MASR and PHRO see the actions of Jagtar Singh Hawara and Balwant Singh as an instance of political crime. The convicted men were not motivated by hope of personal gain nor did they resort to violence mindlessly or on impulse. India is no stranger to such political crimes, indeed the history of the freedom struggle records many. We join Jathedar Vedanti in calling for the death sentence to be commuted to life imprisonment.

From the angle of real politic, hanging Jagtar Singh Harwara and Balwant Singh will add more names to the already very long list of Sikh martyrs. Rather than being weaned away from violence, impressionable minds are likely to take inspiration from them.

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#### ANNOUNCEMENT FOR STUDENTS DOING RESEARCH ON SIKHISM ➔

Most of the literature on Sikhism in Punjabi, English and other languages is superficial, superfluous, contradictory and outright repudiation of philosophy of Guru Nanak (*Gurmat*) enshrined in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS), the only authentic source of Guru Nanak's philosophy. Such misinterpretations are found in books, professional and non-professional journals and all the translations of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib in Punjabi, English and other languages. Repeated lies about Sikhism under the cloak of academic research published by Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press and encyclopedias are taken as truth by the ignorant and gullible.

My recent analysis of the works of W H McLeod, Pashaura Singh, Harjot Oberoi and Doris Jakobsh has revealed that the McLeodian School is creating its own version of Sikhism like the Udasis and Nirmalas created their Brahminical version of Sikhism. After a great deal of introspection and pondering over this problem with learned Sikhs, we are announcing free help and guidance to students who are engaged in research on Sikhism. We urge Sikh students studying for undergraduate degrees to take courses on Sikhism. We will help them with their term papers and theses. As a start, we urge scholars to consult [www.sikhspectrum.com](http://www.sikhspectrum.com) and [www.globalsikhstudies.net](http://www.globalsikhstudies.net) for information on Sikhism based on Aad Guru Granth Sahib.

Baldev Singh, Ph D

E-mail: [baldev11@verizon.net](mailto:baldev11@verizon.net)

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LETTERS TO EDITOR

A SAD STATE OF AFFAIRS

Dear Sir,

I was reading your article on the plight the Sikhs are facing. I, too, am saddened by what is happening to our community. Brother, the problem is that it is 2007, and our people come to USA and Canada without any formal education. I work in the hiring department of a major trucking company. And I get many of our people applying for jobs. Yes, they are hardworking and honest. But they are illiterate to the highest degree, which presents a big problem. Twenty year olds Sikh girls and boys in the year 2007 should be able to speak and write in English. Now the problem here has worsened. Sikh truck drivers are using drugs and alcohol, while operating trucks. Something has to be done to let our people know the importance of education.

Another problem here is that our people make their old parents work in farms and factories, since in order to survive everyone has to work. But this is not the solution. Old people should not be forced to work. And generally Sikh women should not work in a factory. They should stay at home looking after the kids making sure kids do homework. It further creates problems, as no one gets exposed to any learning. There should be some center in Punjab, which prepares people before they arrive here. What do you think?

S. Singh

Email: <ohbbb_mayrii@yahoo.com>

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## SIKHS AND THE TRANSFER OF POWER

Dear Editor,

This refers to the review of a book *The Sikhs and Transfer of Power (1942-47)* written by Dr Kirpal Singh and published in the issue of April-June 07. The review by Dr Kharak Singh is very well written and covers all major happenings in that period. The book appears to be well researched. Some Sikh writers blame the Sikh Leaders that they failed to get a homeland for Sikhs. The leaders might have committed some mistakes but, if they had accepted the proposal by Mr Jinnah, it would have been a blunder. Their decision to remain with India was correct. Sardar Baldev Singh is blamed for not accepting an invitation by some British MPs to stay back to deliberate on Sikh demands. It would have been useless. I think that Dr Kirpal Singh did

not get a small book in which there are all-secret letters written by Lord Mountbatten to Secretary of State. It was published in 1980 or 81. I read it in 1983. In these letters, the viceroy had given details about his talks with Mr Jinnah and Congress leaders. There is only one letter in which he writes about meeting with a delegation of Sikh leaders. They demanded that if Pakistan was being created for Muslims, there should be a Sikh homeland too. The Viceroy listened to their demands patiently. Then he told the delegation that Pakistan would consist of only those areas where Muslims are in majority. Please tell me if there was even a district in Punjab where Sikhs were in majority. There was none. He further said that as the Sikhs had no majority area in Punjab, Sikhs' homeland demand could not be accepted. He advised that if they wanted that more than 90% of Sikhs should remain in one state, they might consider the proposal of Mr Jinnah. As per views of Maharaja of Patiala, proposal of Mr Jinnah was very attractive but he could not accept it being practical. It is clear that Sikh leaders tried their best but failed to get any thing because they were in minority every where.

Mall Singh  
183, Vasant Enclave  
New Delhi – 110 057

□

### ANNUAL SEMINAR

The Institute of Sikh Studies is holding its annual seminar on the theme, "**THE CHANGING DEMOGRAPHY OF PUNJAB**" on 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> November, 2007 from 10.00 AM to 4 PM (Both days) at its campus, Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Kanthala, Industrial Area, Phase II, Near Tribune Chowk, Chandigarh

Dr S S Johl, eminent Economist, will deliver the keynote address. A large number of prominent scholars will present their papers on various aspects of the theme, to be followed by discussions.

All are cordially invited to participate in the seminar.

YEAR READER

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## ABSTRACTS OF SIKH STUDIES

### OBJECTIVES

1. To bring the latest advances in Sikh Studies to the notice of scholars and general readers.
2. To project a correct image of Sikhism and the Sikh Community in India as well as abroad.
3. To watch, report and rebut any distortions or misrepresentations of Sikh Religion and its History.
4. To serve as a living link, and provide coordination among organisations engaged in promotion of Sikh Studies.
5. To highlight problems of Sikh diaspora, and suggest solutions.
6. To arrange reviews of important publications relating to Sikhism.
7. To assist readers in framing an informed opinion on matters relating to Sikhism and Sikh Studies.
8. To give publicity to activities of various Sikh Societies around the world.
9. To act as a forum for expression of readers' views.
10. To advertise appropriate literature on Sikhism.

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